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ABSTRACT

This report describes five state systems of support in low-performing schools. Discussion of each state system includes a description of the accountability system, the process for identifying low-performing schools, funding resources available, the technical assistance provided, the provider of that assistance, and the resources used to support the system. States were selected from among 11 states that, at the time of the study, required all schools identified as low-performing to receive assistance. The five states included in this study are Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, and Texas. Data collection consisted of a review of relevant state documents and interviews with key individuals involved in organizing and delivering technical assistance (state and district staff and external assistance providers). While specific improvement strategies varied by school and district, they tended to include needs and goals assessment, strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation and feedback. (Contains 13 references.) (SM)

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State Support to Low-Performing Schools

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Council of Chief State School Officers

March 2003

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Council of Chief State School Officers

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nationwide, nonprofit organization of the public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Activity, and five extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO seeks its members' consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public. Through its structure of standing and special committees, the Council responds to a broad range of concerns about education and provides leadership and technical assistance on major educational issues.

Division of State Services and Technical Assistance

The Division of State Services and Technical Assistance supports state education agencies in developing standards-based systems that enable all children to succeed. Initiatives of the division support improved methods for collecting, analyzing, and using information for decision making, development of assessment resources, creation of high-quality professional preparation and development programs, emphasis on instruction suited for diverse learners, and the removal of barriers to academic success. The Division combines existing activities in the former Resource Center on Educational Equity, State Education Assessment Center, and State Leadership Center.

Initiative to Improve Achievement in High Poverty Schools

The Initiative to Improve Achievement in High Poverty Schools, launched in the spring of 1995, focuses on building the capacity of state education agency officials and their local partners through effective implementation of ESEA, Title I, and other federal and state programs. The Initiative, whose goal is to ensure that students in high poverty schools gain the knowledge and skills necessary for sustained success, has come to encompass a wide set of activities and products to reach these objectives. These include national working conferences, special education projects, extended learning and development projects, the Limited English Proficient Students Assessment Project, State Support of Alternative and Community-Based High Schools, and the High School Reform and Immigrant Students' Project.

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Michael DiMaggio, Senior Project Associate, updated this report in October 2002 to reflect changes in state policy associated with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 under the supervision of Elaine Bonner-Tompkins, Co-Director of the High Poverty School Initiative. Gitanjali Pande, Project Associate, provided editorial assistance with this updated report.

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Introduction

During the 1990s, standards-based reform emerged as the predominant education policy approach of states and districts around the country. Following individual state initiatives in the 1980s, the standards-based framework became the cornerstone of federal education policy with the 1994 reauthorization of Title I. The 1994 amendments required states to develop and have in place by the 2000-2001 school year content and performance standards; assessments aligned with those standards; and systems in place for rewarding successful schools and identifying and assisting schools failing to make progress. Currently, most states have established standards for what students should know in core subjects and assessments to measure student learning, with many states also having systems for holding schools accountable for results.

The newly reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (ESEA), also called the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), maintains the requirement that states establish statewide systems of intensive and sustained support and improvement for local education agencies (LEAs) and low-performing schools. However, not all states have a system in place. According to an Education Week's *Quality Counts 2001* report, only 27 states have policies to identify and provide assistance to low-performing schools.[1] The remaining states are faced with the more difficult task of designing and implementing systems for improving low-performing schools and districts. States face diverse demographic, political, technical, resource, and capacity issues in developing a system to comply with NCLB Title I requirements.

While there is a great deal of consensus from the research on what effective, high-performing schools and districts look like, researchers and policymakers continue to struggle with issues regarding scaling up successful strategies and sustaining those improvements. Complicating matters, the 2001 legislation allows each state to create its own accountability system and definition of adequate yearly progress (AYP). NCLB has set forth a definition of AYP that most likely will increase the number of schools identified as low-performing. As a result, states have increasing demands from the public at large to improve outcomes in low-performing schools. These demands come at a time when reductions in state revenues make it difficult to implement new state policies.

High-Performing Schools and Districts

Recent studies, supporting two decades of research on effective schools, concur that effective high-performing schools share certain characteristics: high expectations for all students; a shared vision; clear goals and objectives; a sense of shared responsibility for school improvement; access to appropriate training and resources; teacher collaboration; and additional support for students to improve achievement (Charles A. Dana Center, 1999; The Education Trust, 1999; Cotton, 1995).

Research on high-performing districts has also identified common characteristics: high expectations for student achievement; data-based decision making; curriculum aligned with assessment; and a common vision for school improvement. In addition, high-performing districts provide quality staff development and allocate resources to areas most likely to result in improved achievement (Cawelti and Protheroe, 2001; AFT, 2000).

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools and Districts

While high-performing schools and districts share many of the same characteristics, the paths they follow to high performance are specific to each school or district. Because schools operate in different contexts and therefore have different needs, reform efforts need to be appropriate for the school context. Research demonstrates that few low-performing schools and districts have the capacity to undertake and sustain reform efforts on their own. Low-Performing schools and districts often lack the knowledge and resources to implement appropriate improvement strategies. Therefore, states must play a stronger role in building district capacity to assist low- performing schools. There is a range of strategies for achieving this goal, including providing information, resources, and assistance to help schools and districts.

[1] The number of states with these systems might have changed in anticipation of recent NCLB requirements.

The Report

The purpose of this report is to describe five state systems of support in an effort to provide state and district policymakers with information on promising activities that help low-performing schools and districts. This report provides a snapshot of implementation efforts at one place in time and is not intended to be an evaluation of these state systems. The states included in this report have built and are operating systems to assist districts and schools most in need of improvement, but the systems are considered works in progress and are continually being adjusted.

Discussion of each state system includes a description of the process for identifying low- performing schools, the assistance provided, the provider of that assistance, and the resources used to support the system. States selected for this study were chosen from among the 11 states that, at the time this study was initiated, required all schools identified as low-performing to receive assistance (*Quality Counts 2001*). From those 11 states, the five chosen varied in size, geographic location, student population, and strategies for delivering assistance. The states included in this report are Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, and Texas. Data collection consisted of a review of relevant state documents and interviews with key individuals involved in organizing and delivering technical assistance: state and district staff and external assistance providers.

The State Systems of Support

While specific improvement strategies vary by school and district, current research suggests that schools and districts successful in their reform efforts have engaged in a four-step process: (1) needs and goals assessment, (2) strategic planning, (3) implementation, and (4) evaluation and feedback (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The five state systems described here include a variety of strategies to assist districts and schools through each step of this process.

Needs Assessment

States and districts place increasing emphasis on interpreting and analyzing data to guide school improvement. A needs assessment provides the foundation for the planning process. It furnishes information that steers development of the vision, goals, and strategies for improvement. The needs assessment also identifies a school's strengths and weaknesses, and suggests priorities for improving student achievement and moving toward the achievement of state standards.

Each of the five states included in this study have developed a process by which low-performing schools are assisted in identifying their needs and setting goals for improvement. Each state provides a team external to the school to conduct the needs assessment. The teams are varied in their make-up and may include state staff, district staff, board of education personnel, university faculty, parents, or other outside experts. The needs assessment process and tools used also vary by state, but all include analyses of achievement data, interviews with members of the school community, and classroom observations.

For example, district teams in Louisiana use a state-developed tool for collecting, organizing, and reporting school data that employs a balance of qualitative and quantitative measures to facilitate triangulation of data. Protocols and instruments provided include computer scannable questionnaires, classroom observation summary forms, and a faculty needs assessment. Once the data has been collected and organized, the school is given a data notebook containing summaries of all data collected to be used in developing the school improvement plan.

An important role for state education agencies is collecting and reporting data that can be used by schools and districts to inform the improvement process. The five states differ in the kinds of data they make available to schools and districts. The 1994 and 2002 reauthorizations of ESEA (NCLB) require states to report assessment data disaggregated by student subgroups. Of the five states included in this study only Texas currently does this, reporting its data by gender, racial/ethnic group, low-income status, and special education status. Through its Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), the Texas Education Agency collects a broad range of information on districts, schools, teachers, and students. The Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) utilizes data collected through PEIMS for annual reports on student performance. In this report, performance indicators are disaggregated by ethnicity, special education, and low-income status. The reports, which include data on school and district staff, finances, programs, and demographics, provide information for the site review teams and schools or districts as they develop improvement plans.

Planning

The development of school or district improvement plans is an integral part of all five state systems of support to low-performing schools and districts. Areas of need are identified through the needs assessment process and are addressed through a school improvement plan identifying the resources and strategies to be used to address those areas. Schools are provided assistance in developing the plans by the external review team or other state staff members assigned to the school. State staff serve an important role as sources of information for schools during the planning process. They can identify appropriate strategies or programs for addressing needs, federal, state, and local resources to support

implementation of the improvement plan, and professional development opportunities.

The five state systems described here all contain elements intended to involve districts more directly in school improvement efforts. In New York districts with low-performing schools must develop local assistance plans. These plans must include the findings and implications from the needs assessment, the steps the district will take to raise student achievement, the resources provided to implement the plan, the professional development activities that will support the plan, and the timeline for implementation. New York asks that its district- and school-level improvement plans be developed collaboratively to ensure consistency and coordination of effort.

Implementation

States provide a variety of human and financial resources to help schools and districts implement their improvement plans. These resources may include additional staff, professional development, information, or additional funds. All five states provide both assistance and sanctions depending on the degree of progress schools are making toward achieving state standards. The lowest performing schools including schools, not making sufficient progress, receive more intensive support and face stiffer sanctions than those schools performing just below standards or making adequate progress.

The five states vary in the types, levels, and methods of assistance provided to schools in the implementation of improvement plans. However, all states attempt to provide long-term, sustained assistance and support aimed at building the capacity of the school and district to support continuous improvement efforts. The Illinois Schools With Targeted Assistance Gaining Excellence (STAGE) program is organized around the Baldrige framework for continuous improvement and is designed to provide schools with three to five years of on-going support. The state, district, and school negotiate a performance agreement that delineates the goals, strategies, performance indicators, and resources that will be used to achieve the goals. The state works with the district and school throughout the process to build the capacity of the district and the school for continuous improvement.

States' efforts in assisting low-performing schools implement their improvement plans are centered on issues of instruction, professional development, and standards implementation. This supports recent research, which demonstrates that good teaching matters in student achievement, and states are emphasizing support for quality teaching in their school support efforts. States are faced with the challenge of coordinating professional development activities to support district and school goals. Texas, New York, Illinois, and Louisiana use regional service centers to provide training and technical assistance focused on the particular needs of a school or district and conduct statewide training.

Evaluation and Feedback

Evaluation and feedback strategies are critical components of the improvement process. By monitoring improvement efforts and gathering information on the effectiveness of specific strategies or programs, schools and districts are able to modify their improvement plans, expand effective programs, or disband ineffective ones. Evaluation and feedback are built into state systems at many different levels. Based on ratings defined through state accountability systems, schools and districts may receive rewards, sanctions, assistance, or a combination of these actions. Schools are required to include evaluation processes as part of their school improvement plans to monitor their progress toward measurable goals. Some states require that schools regularly submit status reports on the implementation of improvement plans or conduct regular audits of low-performing schools. Other states merely review school and/or district improvement plans. In addition, state staff assigned to specific schools or districts provide regular feedback to school and district staff regarding the development and implementation of improvement plans.

States also monitor the effectiveness of state- or regional-level assistance to schools through a variety of methods. Some states simply monitor student performance on state assessments; others conduct customer satisfaction surveys of schools and districts receiving assistance; and others review the logs kept by the technical assistance providers. In Texas evaluation and feedback are built into every level of the system. Schools and districts identified as low performing are given feedback from the peer review team on, among other issues, the effectiveness of planning and decision-making processes to address areas of low performance. Follow-up visits provide feedback on the status of a school's improvement. The state also evaluates the effectiveness of assistance provided by the regional Education Service Centers (ESC) through an examination of student achievement data and a customer survey administered to district superintendents, principals, and teachers in schools and districts that have received assistance.

The Role of the District

Standards-based reform requires changes in the role of state education agencies and district central offices. Districts are critical to the improvement process through the provision of resources, information, and incentives to facilitate school improvement. States play a key role in supporting districts and schools as they move through this process. During the initial stages of standards-based reform implementation, there was a strong tendency to focus on the school as the key agent in improving academic achievement, with little attention paid to the role of the district. However, experiences of the past

decade suggest that focusing change primarily at the school level is unlikely to lead to sustained improvement. These case studies demonstrate an increasing awareness of state education agencies towards the districts' role in the improvement process.

The Maryland General Assembly established a city-state partnership with the Baltimore City Public School System to address school failure in that district. Under the law establishing the partnership, a new governing board was appointed to replace the Baltimore school board, and the district was required to develop a master plan focused on student achievement and on the management and accountability of the Baltimore City Public School System. The plan provided for the reorganization of the central office, the development of a citywide curriculum framework, and a program of professional development aligned with the state standards.

States Challenges

Each of these states continues to review and revise their systems of support as they gain greater understanding of the factors contributing to low performance and the most effective strategies for improving student achievement. States face a number of challenges in their efforts to improve low-performing schools.

- State education agencies face a variety of challenges in their internal capacity to provide the kinds of assistance needed to improve low-performing districts and schools. Standards-based reform has required changes not only from schools but also from state education agencies and district central offices. Ensuring that all students achieve high standards requires that state education agencies shift from compliance-based work that ensures regulations are followed, to capacity-building efforts that facilitate change. State education agencies must increase their internal capacity by developing an infrastructure to collect and analyze data, create structures for continuous learning by staff, and hire or train people with the appropriate knowledge and skills. To guide and support districts and schools in their improvement efforts, state education agencies must increase their capacity to provide information, training, and other forms of assistance to schools and districts. These changes require resources, both human and financial. However, the financial constraints currently facing many state education agencies may seriously impede their ability to build their own internal capacity for reform.

- A potential problem for all states is the sustainability of reforms. In each of these systems, schools and districts are provided additional funds to help them implement new programs, train teachers, hire personnel, etc. The extent to which these programs are sustainable once additional funds are no longer available is still unknown.

- All states are faced with the challenge of recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. Administrators in all five states expressed concern over high teacher turnover, particularly in low-performing schools. A stable, qualified faculty is critical for the implementation of school improvement strategies. Attrition inhibits the ability of the school to develop a shared mission and vision, to develop and implement strategies aligned with that mission or vision, and to create a supportive climate. In addition, research has demonstrated that teacher quality is one of the most salient factors in determining student achievement. The ability of states to develop systems to help teachers become competent and continuous learners is critical for sustained school improvement.

- Building strong partnerships is key to improving student and school performance. High-Performing schools work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders to focus efforts on improving the academic achievement of their students. Schools and districts alone cannot address all the factors contributing to low performance. The most successful school improvement efforts include the community in capacity building. Partnerships with parents, businesses, colleges and universities, and health and social service agencies provide important sources of support for addressing the large and complex problems schools face. States can play an important role by providing information on effective collaborative strategies and practices, and through training for building and sustaining partnerships.

- States have developed processes for identifying where students are and where they need to be, but states and districts also need to help teachers and administrators understand how to use data better to improve teaching and learning. State assessments are often administered in the spring and the results are provided to districts and schools in the fall of the following school year. Teachers receive assessment results for their students after those students have moved on to the next grade and the next teacher. While this type of data provides valuable information about the broader issues of curriculum and instruction, it does not provide teachers the information they need to modify curriculum and instruction to meet the specific needs of their students. In addition, by not doing so, students and their parents have no way of knowing what they did right or wrong on the tests. Teachers need access to and training for classroom assessment tools that provide information that allows them to make decisions daily about ways to modify curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of their students.

Illinois

The Illinois State Board of Education four years ago developed a new assessment system that is aligned with state standards already in place. Simultaneously, the State Board established a designation system now under revision based on the *No Child Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) and a system of support for low-performing schools, referred to as *High Priority Schools*. The new, more rigorous testing system resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of schools identified as low performing. In 1997-1998, the last year under the old assessment system, 71 schools were identified as low performing. In 2001, under the new system, 593 schools were identified. The state's new support system for high-priority schools, implemented in 2001-2002, places more emphasis on building district capacity to assist low-performing schools and is intended to provide more intensive support to districts with the greatest need.

State Assessment System

In 1997 the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) adopted the Illinois Learning Standards (ILS), which define what students should know and be able to do in seven subject areas: English language arts, mathematics, science, social science, physical development/health, fine arts, and foreign language. Following the adoption of the state standards, the ISBE, in cooperation with Illinois teachers, district curriculum and assessment directors, and MetriTech, developed a new assessment based on these standards. The Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) replaced the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) in February 1999. In spring 1999 tests in reading, mathematics, and writing were administered, followed by science and social science in 2000. Physical development/health and fine arts special studies IGAP items were subsumed within the science and social science tests. The ISAT assesses grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 in reading, writing, and mathematics; and grades 4 and 7 in science, social science, physical development/health, and fine arts. The ISBE also developed a voluntary physical development/health and fine arts ISAT for students at grade 9 and 10, since these content areas are not assessed on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE). The 1999 ISAT data serve as the baseline for determinations of schools' progress.

The Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) was first administered in April 2001 to grade 11 students. The PSAE is not a high school exit exam, but scores are entered on students' transcripts. The assessment covers reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social science. The PSAE incorporates the ACT and two Work Keys assessments along with ISBE-developed components.

Accountability System

Since 1992 the state has had authority to identify low-performing schools through the Illinois Academic Watch List (AWL). Regulations adopted in 1996 added an Academic Early Warning List (AEWL) to the accountability system. Schools not meeting state goals were placed on the AEWL. If they did not demonstrate significant academic improvement, they were later placed on an AWL. The first AEWL was published during the 1997-1998 school year. Due to the implementation of a new state assessment, the list was temporarily suspended beginning with the 1999-2000 school year for all schools. It was reinstated for K-8 (elementary and middle/junior high grades) schools in the 2001-02 school year and will be reinstated for high schools in 2002-2003.

To demonstrate adequate yearly progress, student performance scores must increase at a rate that will result in 50 percent of students meeting or exceeding standards within five years. Schools placed on the AEWL will have five years to reach proficiency. For example, a school with 40 percent of its students meeting or exceeding standards would have to improve by 2 percent per year to be considered to be making adequate yearly progress. The *No Child Left Behind Act* will establish a new baseline of approximately 40 percent meeting and exceeding standards in reading and mathematics (composite and subgroups) based on the 2002 ISAT assessment results.

School performance data is reported publicly through School Report Cards. The 2000 Illinois School Report Card included sections on

2 Work Keys assessments test the level of workplace skills attained in a specific skill area.

- Students, including data on demographics, attendance, mobility, and truancy
- Instructional setting, including data on class size and the racial/ethnic background of teachers
- School districts finances, including data on per pupil expenditure
- Academic performance (including ISAT results, which are reported by performance level for each subject area and grade level and disaggregated only by the number of students with or without an Individualized Education Program)
- Planned improvements for the school and district

Identification of High-Priority Schools

Schools placed on the Academic Early Warning List (AEWL), those not meeting the 50 percent passing rate for all students within five years, and not making adequate yearly progress (AYP), are placed on the Academic Watch List (AWL). To achieve AYP, a school must improve student scores enough each year in a five-year period to achieve the 50 percent of students meeting or exceeding standard. If a school makes AYP but does not have at least 50 percent of its students meeting standards, it remains on the AEWL. If a school does not make AYP, it becomes eligible for placement on the AWL. These identification criteria will be adapted to meet the AYP requirements of the NCLB Act.

Funding Resources for High-Priority Districts and Schools

For the 2000-2001 school year, $56 million was at the disposal of the state to support high-priority schools. The ISBE drew on a variety of funding sources to support its improvement efforts. Federal funds were available through Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) projects, Reading Excellence Act (REA), Title I, System of Support/AEWL, and Summer Bridges. The state provided $4.5 million for the System of Support/AEWL and $26 million for the Summer Bridges program. In 2001-2002 all districts with schools placed on the AEWL were eligible for support. With a few exceptions, districts received funds from multiple sources. The intent was to maximize resources so all districts with schools designated as high priority received support. The exception was Summer Bridges, which was available to all districts.

Technical Assistance for High-Priority Districts and Schools

The Student and School Progress Division of the ISBE is responsible for implementing the new System of Support (SOS). Within the Student and School Progress Division, a System of Support Division was created that combined staff from three divisions that worked in the areas of comprehensive school reform, district/school continuous improvement, and extended learning. The System of Support Division has three goals:

Academic Intervention

- Establish an articulated, standards-based curriculum from early childhood through high school.
- Use multiple assessments to help determine and monitor individual student progress toward meeting state learning standards and to inform instruction.
- Ensure the development of individualized learning plans for students who are two or more years below grade level in reading and mathematics.
- Ensure the involvement of parents and families in ways that advance the academic success of their children.
- Provide extended learning opportunities for students not proficient in reading, writing, and mathematics standards in pre-kindergarten through fifth grades.

Educator Quality

- Assure teachers' expertise in assessing individual student progress, determining student needs, and applying appropriate instructional strategies to ensure student success.
- Assure all teachers are qualified and have content expertise to deliver a standards-based curriculum.
- Develop instructional leadership capacity in school administrators.
- Develop recruitment and selection of highly qualified teachers.
- Develop mentoring and programs for teachers with less than four years experience.
- Develop continuing professional development systems that are results oriented.

Resources

- Leverage state and federal discretionary and competitive financial resources to assist the district/school in implementing their plans.
- Work with local boards of education and central office staff to ensure policies, practices, and

resources are directed toward improving student performance in reading, mathematics, and science.

- The System of Support Division follows a four-step process in working with districts to realize these goals.

- **Step 1 - Analysis of District and School Operation**

  Every district/school regardless of the stage of intervention (school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring) is reviewed using criteria common to continuous improvement systems and directly aligned with the Baldrige *Education Criteria for Performance Excellence*. The process uses seven criteria to gather information on a districts' school's systems for improving its high-priority schools. The district analysis is conducted to gain an understanding of the district's systems to support high-priority schools. The school analysis is conducted by the school support team using several tools and results in a school feedback report. A rubric is used to judge the school improvement plan. Upon completion of the district/school analysis, a performance agreement is developed that outlines the specific services and support to be provided from each support team member based on the System of Support goals.

- **Step 2 - Develop District/School Improvement Plans and Performance Agreement**

  The district/school support team works with the district, parents/families, and school staff to design a district improvement plan aligned to the Baldrige framework and a school improvement plan to improve student performance based on the SOS goals/strategies and to help the school meet its goals for improvement, including adequate yearly progress. The district/school support team may have the expertise to facilitate the design of the plan or may broker resources to aid in the design of the plan. Each plan will be integrated and demonstrate how resources are dedicated to the achievement of the plan.

- **Step 3 - Implement District/School Continuous Improvement Plan and Agreement**

  The school support team focuses on the implementation of the school improvement plan. An agreement between the state education agency, regional office of education/intermediate service center, other partners, and district is developed that describes the resources from each party to support implementation of the plan. Each district with one or more schools in high-priority status is assigned a support team, including educator(s)-in-residence (EiRs) who have been recruited, selected, and prepared to support the school.

- **Step 4 - Monitor District/School Continuous Improvement Plan and Agreement**

  As with the initial review and analysis of the district and school, the responsibility for monitoring implementation of the plan is the responsibility of the System of Support Division. Each school has a process for monitoring and reporting on their progress to their school community, district, and the state education agency. Performance agreement reviews and monitoring of the plans occur semiannually.

Each district has a state agency consultant as its single point of contact. This individual works with a team from across the agency, education services centers, and external partners to coordinate programs and resources for which the district is eligible. The individual also facilitates the development of the district continuous improvement plan and monitors progress of the district performance agreement.

Support Team Composition

NCLB defines the competencies of district/school support teams as persons knowledgeable about scientifically based research and practice on teaching and learning and about successful school wide projects, school reform, and improving educational opportunities for low-achieving students. The following organizations have been identified as meeting these requirements. The degree of services from each organization varies from district/school to district/school based on the ability and will of the district/school to achieve the goals and implement the strategies identified on the preceding pages (see Table 1).

Table I: Technical Assistance, Services, and Resources: Illinois State Board of Education

State Education Agency	
System of Support	Each district/school will have a designated ISBE staff person from the System of Support Division that will work with the following ISBE divisions to garner and coordinate services and resources. This person will be each district/school's point of contact with the state education agency and be responsible to: • Assist districts/schools in using data to identify specific scientifically based and research proven practices to improve student achievement; • Approve district and school improvement plans that meet requirements and are based on data, research, and proven practices; • Negotiate district/school performance agreement to insure implementation of plan; • Monitor district/school progress based on agreement/approved plans; • Programmatically approve all federal and state resources to ensure they are directed toward increasing student achievement and implementation of plans; and • Coordinate technical assistance and services from ISBE and other sources.
Curriculum and Instruction	Provide Reading First grants to support reading/writing, Summer Bridges grants for extended learning, and Comprehensive School Reform grants; arrange for regional and/or district training on scientifically based reading and mathematics programs, e.g. Meeting the Challenge, M2T2.
Early Childhood	Provide funding for early childhood and full day kindergarten programs; offer technical assistance to establish quality programs.
Career Development/ Preparation	Provide funding for service learning, career academies, and small learning communities and technical assistance to establish quality programs.
Certificate Renewal & Leadership	Provide technical assistance on the development of results-oriented staff development programs; broker training for leadership development; provide Title II grants to increase teacher and principal quality.
Professional Preparation & Recruitment	Provide funding for mentoring and induction programs; provide data on highly qualified teachers; give advice on recruitment/selection processes; provide access to preparation programs for paraprofessionals to meet federal requirements.
Special Education and English Language Learners	Provide materials, training, and technical assistance to assist districts in serving these sub-group populations.
Grant Program Support	Approve federal and state budgets based on programmatic review by SOS district/school coordinator; offer technical assistance to ensure fiscal compliance with state and federal laws; provide 21st CCLC grants.
Assessment	Provide materials and training on how to effectively use the state assessment results for district and school improvement.
Educators-in-residence	Educators knowledgeable about scientifically based research and practice on teaching and learning, successful school reform, and improving educational opportunities for students who do not meet state learning standards. Educators may be highly qualified or distinguished teachers and principals, pupil services personnel, representatives of higher education, consultants, regional organization staff, or others who meet the following competencies.
Standards-Led Education:	Implementation of standards guide school and classroom decisions focusing on student learning with the same expectations for all students and where assessment results are used to inform the teacher about the effectiveness of curricular and instructional decisions. • Knowledge: Understands major concepts, principles, and theories central to the teaching profession, scientifically based research and practice as it applies to the Illinois Learning Standards, particularly reading, writing, and mathematics. Knowledgeable about formal and informal assessment strategies and how to use them to support continuous development of all students in a standards-led system.

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Table 1: Technical Assistance, Services, and Resources: Illinois State Board of Education, continued

	• Skills: Able to model effective teaching strategies and the use of the Illinois Learning Standards in a classroom setting. Uses knowledge of learning, teaching, and student development to make decisions for instruction. Able to adapt to different learning situations and act as a support to teachers and administrators in a school setting. Helps teachers create learning experiences that make content meaningful to all students. Critically evaluates own performance and capabilities, actively engages in own professional development.
Continuous Improvement:	Strategic planning, evaluation, and monitoring progress. • Knowledge: Understands change and its effect. Knows how to apply strategies and tools to facilitate continuous improvement (data collection, strategic planning, goal setting, etc.). Understands the school improvement process and how to create a meaningful school improvement plan. Can objectively evaluate personnel and program implementation. • Skills: Can create a sense of urgency with schools and communities about the need for change, yet respect and honor past and current practice. Skillful in dialoguing with staff to help clarify their thinking and to help staff think beyond currently defined boundaries. Able to analyze trends and help school staff learn how to measure progress and change and predict future challenges.
Public Engagement and Educator Quality:	Provides leadership in facilitating learning community members, commitment to individual and organizational learning. • Knowledge: Understands factors that influence motivation and engagement. Knowledgeable about components of an effective learning environment (includes teamwork, networking, and knowledge acquisition). Understands collaboration and teamwork as the preferred means to achieve organizational goals. • Skills: Able to influence staff and students to work cooperatively and productively. Able to motivate staff to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction. Able to help staff make decisions that are best for the school without dictating solutions. Negotiates effectively to accomplish common goals. Able to facilitate groups to build teams and reach consensus. Provides frequent and effective communications. Builds relationships by demonstrating behaviors that others view as honest and credible.
Regional offices of education/ intermediate service centers	Arrange for the delivery of professional development on scientifically based reading and mathematics content and strategies, standards-aligned classrooms, school improvement processes/plans.
Illinois Family Education Center/ Solid Foundation	Train teacher facilitators in each school to support family reading and home links; train and support parent educators to train parents on how to support reading at home; offer Parents As Teachers program.
Technology Hubs	Provide technical assistance and support to districts/schools on developing their technology infrastructure and incorporating instructional technology.
Illinois Learning partnership	Provide training for district/school learning leadership teams that support shared decision making.

Educators In Residence

Educators in Residence (EiRs) are assigned to districts in teams, one of whom is an ISBE employee. The number of team members depends on the number of districts/schools but currently there are eight regionally based teams. During the 2002-2003 school year, there are 40 EiRs serving 63 districts.

EiRs are teachers or administrators with at least five years, experience, recent experience teaching in a classroom setting, no more than two years out of an educational position, and a valid Illinois teaching certificate. Educators no more than two years after retirement and meeting the above requirements are also eligible. They are assigned to schools or districts in which they have not worked.

Each team consists of persons who have varying areas of expertise and experience. However, location has been the primary factor in assigning EiRs to districts. It is the intent to have EiRs traveling within 60 miles to the school they are serving. Therefore, recruitment of EiRs is targeted to areas that will likely have low-performing schools and districts, while minimizing their travel.

The selection process for EiRs includes three stages: a portfolio, performance tasks, and observation. Approximately 20 percent of the applicants make it

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through the process to become EiRs. The state recruits individuals with strong content knowledge in reading, writing, and mathematics, good teaching practices, knowledge of school improvement, and experience with professional development strategies.

EiR support teams receive intensive learning opportunities prior to and during their involvement with districts and schools. Additionally, 20 days of training are offered with collaboration and networking meetings held bimonthly, either in Springfield or regionally.

The training sessions focus on the following areas:

- School culture and public engagement
  Analysis and interpretation of data
- Action planning that drives improved instruction and academic improvement
- Cognitive coaching for instructional improvement including observation skills
- Team-building – problem solving, interpersonal and intra personal skills, decision making, and meeting management
- Scientifically based reading, writing, mathematics, and science curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Standards-led classrooms
  Diversity
- Delivering and supporting professional growth through mentoring and coaching
- Effective presentation strategies for various audiences

Some likely activities include model teaching, team teaching, coaching and mentoring teachers on best practices; working with teachers and administration on curriculum alignment with the Illinois Learning Standards, advising on data and assessment practices, guiding the development, revision, and implementation of the School Improvement Plan; researching and brokering information; working with school and district administration on leadership and decision making; and advising on the reallocation of resources (money, time, and staff).

Other Resources Available to Low-Performing Schools

In accordance with the NCLB Act of 2001, 5 percent of Title I Part A is designated for the System of Support. Of this, 95 percent of the 5 percent ($8,253,520) must be designated in grants to LEAs for schools that are in school improvement or corrective action. Comprehensive School Reform provides $9,045,318 (Title I, Part F), and an additional $3,250,754 (Title V, Part D) will also be provided to these schools. These funds will be awarded to districts based on the actions in the approved school improvement plan and specified in the district performance agreement. Specifically the grant dollars can be spent to

- Develop and implement an articulated, standards-based curriculum
- Conduct assessments to determine and monitor student progress
- Implement individualized learning plans for students not meeting reading and math standards
- Support family involvement to advance academic success
- Offer extended learning opportunities
- Implement research-based instructional strategies in reading and mathematics
- Ensure highly qualified and effective staff in every classroom
- Ensure principals provide instructional leadership
- Recruit and select highly qualified staff
- Provide mentoring and induction programs for staff
- Deliver and support results-oriented continuing professional development
- Implement technology to support reading and mathematics instruction

ISBE will use the remaining 5 percent allowed for state activities ($434,396—Title I, Part A and $476,069–CSR) for staff salaries and related costs associated with the support teams. The support teams will include ROE/ISC staff, educators-in-residence, and organization staff assigned to work by region. Other federal and state funding sources directed toward the System of Support and available to help low-performing schools include

- Title I, Part A (2 percent School Improvement Allocation)
- Title I, Part F (Comprehensive School Reform)
- Title I, Accountability
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- Bridges to Learning—Extended Day & Year
- Parental Involvement—Solid Foundations

Additional funding sources will be made available based on a specific need identified in the district performance agreement. These are identified in Table 2.

Table 2. Federal and State Funding Sources: Illinois State Board of Education

Federal Funds	State Funds
Title I, Part B (Reading First for competitive, eligible districts)	Mentoring, Induction, and Recruitment
Title II, Part A (Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting)	Teachers Academy for Math and Science
Title II, Part D (Enhancing Education Through Technology)	Early Childhood
Title IV, Part A (Safe and Drug-Free Schools & Communities)	Technology for Success
Title IV, Part B (21st CCLC for competitive, eligible districts)	
Title V, Part A (Innovative Programs)	

Summer Bridges

A summer reading program, Summer Bridges, is available to districts with schools on the AEWL. This extended learning opportunity provides students in grades K through 6 who are at risk of academic failure with a concentrated curriculum in reading and writing. The criteria for eligibility to receive finding for a Summer Bridges program are

- More than 50 percent of students not meeting standards in reading as measured by the ISAT
- Reading Excellence Act/Reading First eligibility
- Participation in the System of Support

The Summer Bridges curriculum and instruction are based on a balanced literacy framework. The related professional development for teachers provide strategies to implement the framework. ISBE has compiled a list of professional development providers for training district personnel. Moreover, teachers receive a mandatory minimum of 30 hours of professional development in teaching reading and writing from the district.

Districts are grouped into consortia by geographic location to plan collaboratively and share experiences. ISBE staff assigned to each consortium provide technical assistance during the planning and implementation of the program. As part of program development, districts must develop student promotion policies that define the rate of growth students must achieve for promotion to the next grade. Pre- and post-assessments of students using an individual reading inventory are required, and a guide is available on the ISBE Web site.

Chicago Public Schools

In 1995 the state legislature directed the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to establish its own accountability system. CPS developed its own probation and remediation process, Summer Bridges program, alternative schools for students two years behind grade level on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, and high school reconstitution and intervention initiatives. However, Chicago schools continue to be identified as low performing by the state. CPS has also identified most Chicago schools on the state's AEWL for remediation, probation, intervention, and reconstitution. Between 1996 and 1999, ISBE provided funding and technical assistance to these schools through its Project Jumpstart initiative, to implement school improvement processes that focused on curriculum alignment, ongoing assessment, professional development, and special assistance for students.

As part of its new district-based approach to assist low-performing schools, ISBE works with CPS to develop a performance agreement for schools identified on the AEWL. The performance agreement specifies how CPS and ISBE will support the schools and the performance requirements for all three parties. Through the first round of CSRD funding, about 80 Chicago schools received funds.

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Louisiana

Louisiana, one of the poorest states in the nation, has historically placed near the bottom on almost every national measure of academic performance. However, since the implementation of the state's new school accountability system in 1999, test scores have shown improvement. The first three years of the new accountability system were characterized by increasing scores on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century, the state's criterion-referenced test, and the norm-referenced Iowa Tests. On annual School Performance Scores, which include student achievement data, attendance, and dropout rates, the state average increased from 69.4 in 1998-1999 to 81.3 in 2000-2001. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2000, Louisiana's fourth graders demonstrated the most improvement in the nation in math; scores increased nine points over the 1996 score, to an average scale score of 218. Louisiana's eighth graders were the third most improved in math, with an increase of seven points, reaching an average scale score of 259[3].

Since 1999 the state has received national recognition for its education reforms. In 1999 the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation awarded Louisiana and seven other states an "A" for their accountability systems. In 2001 *Education Week* gave Louisiana a "B" for its accountability system, putting it in the top fifth in the nation. In 2002 Louisiana received an A- from that same publication.

In designing its system of support to low-performing schools, the Louisiana Department of Education consulted with states that already had successful systems of support in place, such as Kentucky and Texas. Their goal was to implement the best aspects from the lessons learned from these states in ways that suited Louisiana.

State Assessment System

In May 1997 the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved content standards in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign languages, and the arts. A corresponding assessment was also developed. The new criterion-referenced test, the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century (LEAP 21), is intended to measure how well students master the state content standards. In March 1999 tests in English language arts and mathematics for grades 4 and 8 were implemented. In March 2000 the LEAP 21 grade 4 and 8 for tests in science and social studies were added.

In 2000 Louisiana became the first state to implement a promotion policy for elementary and middle students based on performance on state assessments. Students who fail either the mathematics or English language arts portion of the test can attend summer school and are retested at the end of the five-week program. If students fail the test a second time and do not meet other state and local promotion standards, they can be retained in the grade for one year.[4]

A tougher high school graduation exam, the Graduation Exit Exam 21st Century (GEE 21), will be administered for the first time in the 2001-2002 school year. The GEE 21 includes varied item types – multiple choice, short-answer, constructed response, and essay – and is intended to measure application of knowledge, not just recall of facts. Additionally, rather than the pass/fail grading system of the past test, students receive a rating of Advanced, Mastery, Basic, Approaching Basic, or Unsatisfactory. Students scoring at the Unsatisfactory level will not receive a diploma.

Accountability System

In the fall of 1999 Louisiana implemented the School Accountability System for schools containing kindergarten through grade 8. For each school, a School Performance Score (SPS) is calculated using a weighted composite index derived from three or four indicators, which are based on grade level: criterion-referenced tests

3 The 2000 national average scale score for grade 4 mathematics was 226 and the average for grade 8 mathematics was 274.

4 The local school system may override the state policy for students scoring at the unsatisfactory level in English language arts or mathematics if the student scores at the proficient or advanced level on the other tests if parental consent is granted, the student has attended summer school and taken the re-test, and the decision is made in accordance with the local Pupil Progression Plan.

(the LEAP 21), norm-referenced tests (the Iowa Tests); student attendance for grades K-12; and dropout rates for grades 7-12.

Schools are assigned performance labels based on their SPS (See Table 3).

Table 3: Performance Labels: Louisiana Department of Education

Label	School Performance Score
Academically Unacceptable School	45 or below[5]
Academically Below the State Average	45 to state average[6]
Academically Above the State Average	State average to 99.9
School of Academic Achievement	100 – 124.9
School of Academic Distinction	125 – 149.9
School of Academic Excellence	150 or above

A SPS of 100 indicates that a school has reached the state's 10-year goal and a SPS of 150 indicates the school has reached the twenty-year goal. The State's 10 and 20-year goals depict minimum educational performances (See Table 4).

Beginning in the fall of 2001, and every two years thereafter, schools were assigned Growth Labels and Growth Targets. Each school receives a Growth Target that identifies the progress it must make every two years to reach the state's 10- and 20-year goals. The minimum growth requirement is 5 points. Table 5 provides the definition of each Growth Label.

Table 5: Growth Labels: Louisiana Department of Education

Label	Definition
Exemplary Academic Growth	Exceeds Growth Target by 5 points or more
Recognized Academic Growth	Meets or exceeds Growth Target by fewer than 5 points
Minimal Academic Growth	Improving, but not meeting Growth Target
No Growth	SPS declining up to 5 points
School in Decline	SPS declining greater than 5 points

When a school's SPS is greater than or equal to the state goal[7], Minimal Academic Growth, No Growth, and School in Decline labels no longer apply. Schools that receive Exemplary and Recognized Academic Growth labels and show improvement (at least 0.1 points) among their high poverty and special education students are eligible to receive monetary rewards. Rewards are distributed based on the number of schools meeting or exceeding their growth targets, the growth labels they receive, and the number of students in the schools. Even though school personnel decide how rewards will be used, they may not be used for salaries or stipends.

Identification of Low-Performing Schools

Schools labeled Academically Unacceptable or Below the State Average and not meeting their Growth Targets enter into Corrective Actions. The three levels of

Table 4: State Goals: Louisiana Department of Education

Indicators and Weighting	Grades Administered	10-Year Goal	20-Year Goal
CRT (60% K-12)	Grades 4, 8, 10, 11	Average student score at basic	Average student score at mastery
(30% K-12)	Grades 3, 5, 6, 7, 9	Average composite standard score corresponding to the 55th percentile rank in the tested grade level	Average composite standard score corresponding to the 75th percentile rank in the tested grade level
Attendance (10% K-6; 5% 7-12)		95% (grades K-8) 93% (grades 9-12)	98% (grades K-8) 96% (grades 9-12)
Dropout Rate (5% 7-12)		4% (grades 7-8) 7% (grades 9-12)	2% (grades 7-8) 3% (grades 9-12)

5 The Academically Unacceptable Schools rating will be raised to 45 in 2003; in 2005, it will be 60.

6 In 1999-2000 the state average School Performance Score was 77.3, a gain of 7.9 points over the state average for 1998-1999.

7 For the first 10 years of the accountability system, the state goal is defined as the 10-year goal. For the next 10 years, the state goal will be defined as the 20-year goal.

Corrective Actions correspond with both School Performance Scores and progress toward Growth Targets (See Table 6) Corrective Actions are designed to provide schools with additional support and assistance to improve student achievement. A school enters Corrective Action I if it is below the state average and did not make its growth target, or if it is Above the State Average (but less than 100) and has declined in SPS scores. All schools with SPS scores below 45 enter Corrective Actions II. During the first accountability cycle (1999-2000), 57 schools were placed into Level I Corrective Actions. In fall 2001 202 schools were identified as being in Corrective Actions (178 in Level I and 24 in Level II).

Table 6. Criteria for Placement in Corrective Actions: Louisiana Department of Education

Level	Criteria for Placement
Level I	Academically Above the State Average schools with a growth label of School in Decline or No Growth
	Academically below the State Average schools with a growth label of School in Decline, No Growth, or Minimal Academic Growth
Level II	Academically Unacceptable schools I (SPS of 44.9 or less)
	Schools that were in Corrective Actions II the previous cycle, attain their Growth Targets, and still have an SPS below 44.9, remain in Level II
Level III	Academically Unacceptable school in Corrective Actions II the previous cycle that do not attain their Growth Targets (School in Decline, No Growth, or Minimal Academic Growth)

Beginning in fall 2001 schools showing inadequate growth over a two-year cycle entered the Level II Corrective Actions.[8] A school exits Corrective Actions if it meets or exceeds its Growth Target and if its SPS is greater than 30. A school with an SPS greater than or equal to 100 never enters Corrective Actions.

Louisiana publishes District Accountability Rosters and School Report Cards for Principals and School Report Cards for Parents. The District Accountability Rosters provide the baseline SPS, most recent school performance score, growth, Growth Target, Growth Label, and school performance labels for each school in the district. The report also indicates whether or not the school is in Corrective Actions or eligible for rewards. The School Report Card for Principals includes the baseline SPS, the most recent SPS, Growth Target as well as student achievement levels in all tested subject areas, the school's national percentile rank for the Iowa Tests, and attendance rates. The School Report Card for Parents includes the same information as the Principal's report card plus data on class size, percentage of special education students, and faculty qualifications. Achievement results are not usually disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, English language proficiency, or disability; however, beginning in fall 2002 data will be reported as required by NCLB.

Funding Resources Available for Low-Performing Schools

Resources are available to support low-performing schools through various state and federal programs. The state provides funding to these schools through the School Improvement Fund, which was established to assist schools in Corrective Actions. In 2001-2002 $3 million was available for K-8 schools and $750,000 was available for high school/combination schools in Corrective Actions. Each school received approximately $50,000. Schools are strongly encouraged to use these funds for teacher certification and qualification, professional development, curriculum alignment, parental involvement, class size reduction, early intervention and remediation programs, discipline, health or safety programs, and/or extended learning opportunities.

Federal funds are also available to high-poverty schools through the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program, the Reading Excellence Act (REA), Title I Part A, Part B (Reading First), and Part F (Comprehensive School Reform), and for Titles II and III. These funds are targeted, as much as possible, to schools identified through the state accountability system as low performing. CSRD grants are awarded to schools in Corrective Actions that receive the highest possible scores on their School Improvement Plans. Each school receives approximately $50,000 per year for three years.

In addition, the LINCS program (Learning-Intensive Networking Communities for Success) is targeted to low-performing schools. LINCS is a statewide professional development and leadership-training initiative focused on building and strengthening the ability of teachers to design and implement standards-based lessons into their daily instructional program. The program is currently funded at $1.6 million.

8 Inadequate growth is defined as having a SPS of 30 or less; having a SPS between 30.1 and 50 and not meeting the Growth Target; or having a SPS between 50.1 and 99.9 and growth not within 5 points of the Growth Target.

Technical Assistance for Low-Performing Schools

Schools placed in Corrective Actions are provided with additional resources and technical assistance with the expectation that districts will make extensive improvement efforts. There are three levels of Corrective Actions, and technical assistance and sanctions intensify at each level. As a school moves through the levels, further technical assistance is added to the programs already in place.

Technical Assistance at All Levels of Corrective Actions

District Assistance Team

All districts with schools in Corrective Actions are required to form District Assistance Teams (DAT) to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of each school. DATs are usually comprised of four members and may include local education agency personnel, retired educators, or university faculty. District teams use a state-developed diagnostic tool, the School Analysis Model (SAM), to identify schools' strengths and weaknesses through a variety of measures.

The state education department provides both the protocol and instruments to be used in collecting data for the SAM. These include:

- Questionnaires that address school climate, culture, leadership, staff development, curriculum and instruction, and parent and school relations, for administrators, instructional staff, students, and parents
- Interview protocol for administrators, counselors, and instructional staff
- Focus group interview protocols for instructional staff and students
- A faculty needs assessment
- Contextual observation checklist
- Classroom observation summary form
- Archival data organizer
- Exit summary report
- A comprehensive needs assessment final report

DATs conduct individual interviews and focus group interviews with teachers, administrators, parents, and students around issues of school climate, culture, leadership, staff development, curriculum and instruction, and parent and school relations. The data collection tools provide for a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures to facilitate triangulation. Each identified strength or weakness must be supported by at least three data sources.

The DAT teams spend two days in the school collecting data and additional time preparing for the site visit and organizing and analyzing the data. Computer scannable questionnaires, observation forms, and a faculty needs assessment facilitate the analysis of the data. Disaggregating the achievement data, summarizing data from multiple observers, organizing and summarizing qualitative data, and summarizing contextual information observed during the site visit are all components of the SAM process.

The results of the DAT visit are given to the school and used as the basis for the development of a school improvement plan. The Exit Summary Form, given to school staff at the conclusion of the site visit, provides a preliminary report from information gathered during the site visit. A more thorough *Comprehensive Needs Assessment: Final Report*, given to the school after the analysis has been completed, provides staff with a comprehensive review of all data in order of priority and association with improving student learning. This report is used in developing the School Improvement Plan. Additionally, each school is given a data notebook that holds summaries of all data collected. Other DAT responsibilities include:

- Assisting in the development of School Improvement Plans
- Assisting in the evaluation and revision of School Improvement Plans
- Examining and providing advice on coordination and use of school resources, and seeking out and suggesting resources to implement the School Improvement Plan

School Improvement Plan

All schools in Corrective Actions must write a School Improvement Plan (SIP). If in a second or subsequent year of Corrective Actions, the school must revise its plan. The plan must address a variety of topics:

- School's mission statement
- A comprehensive needs assessment
- School demographics
- Summary report of Iowa Tests and LEAP 21/GEE 21 test scores
- Developmental reading assessment scores
- Goals and measurable outcomes
- Effective research-based methods, strategies, and activities to guide curriculum content, instruction, and assessment
- Rationale for research-based strategies
- A professional development component
- Parent and community involvement activities

- External technical support and assistance aligned with assessed needs
- Evaluation strategies
- Coordination of resources and analysis of school budget
- An action plan with timelines and specific activities for implementation

The plan must also include assurance pages, which provide evidence that the school worked with a District Assistance Team to develop its SIP and that the plan was reviewed by the school faculty. It is the districts' responsibility to evaluate the initial SIP using a rubric developed by the state. Thereafter, districts are also responsible for monitoring the implementation of SIPs, on a quarterly basis for Level I schools and monthly for Level II or III schools.

The state has developed a template for the School Improvement Plan, available on the Louisiana Department of Education Web site. The template reduces redundancy in paperwork and allows schools to develop a consolidated plan for all grants (e.g., Title I, CSRD, REA, state accountability).

Beginning in the spring 2001, Corrective Actions, Title I schools, and schools with CSRD grants must use the SIP template for revising and updating plans.

Regional Service Centers

Eight state-funded service centers provide technical assistance and coordination of resources to districts and schools in their region. Currently, much of the service centers' work is centered on DAT and SAM training and technical assistance. However, they provide other services, including training and technical assistance through Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Title I, CSRD, Special Education, Nutrition Assistance, and School Improvement and Accountability.

Summer School

Students who score at the unsatisfactory level in mathematics or English language arts on the grade 4 and 8 LEAP 21 are offered summer school and must retake and pass the LEAP 21 before moving on to grade 5 or 9. Students who do not pass the retest must take yearlong remedial classes, designated to grades 4.5 and 8.5.[9]

In order to maintain a coordinated system of delivery of summer school and remedial tutoring, LEAP 21 materials are available through the Louisiana Public Broadcasting System. The tutoring lessons, which are aired during the summer, are coordinated with the lessons available through the LDE web site. There are about 25 lessons each in grade 4 and 8 math and English language arts. These lessons also offer others, such as parents, the opportunity to get involved with children who need assistance in order to pass the LEAP 21.

According to the Louisiana Department of Education, initial results indicate that the Louisiana summer school program is having a positive impact on student achievement. Two-thirds of the students in grade 4 and 8 retested in 2001 scored higher than when they took the test in the spring, and one-third of the students passed the exam.

Technical Assistance and Sanctions Added at Levels II and III

Distinguished Educators

If a school reaches Level II or III Corrective Actions, it is assigned a Distinguished Educator (DE). The DE assists schools in the development of improvement plans, facilitates the development of a school curriculum that aligns with state tests, works with the school to involve parents and community members, and assists with professional development for school personnel.

Distinguished Educators, who are selected and trained by the state, are usually teachers, administrators, principals, or retired teachers. DE applicants undergo a rigorous six-phase screening and application process that includes an authentic skills assessment comprised of group activities as well as individual speaking and writing activities. Topics for these activities include staff development, school improvement, curriculum and instruction, and diversity. After acceptance into the program, DEs undergo three weeks of training focused on facilitative leadership, District Assistance Team responsibilities, developing School Improvement Plans, team building, technology, and the change process. DEs are assigned to particular schools for two years before returning to their districts.

Highly Skilled Educators

At the request of a district, the state will train district personnel as Highly Skilled Educators (HSE). HSEs undergo DE training but only work with schools in their districts. The training is paid for by the state, but their districts pay HSE salaries. In the 2001-2002 school year the state trained approximately 150 individuals in nine districts to work as Highly Skilled Educators.

[9] The decision to retain a student more than once as a result of failure to score above Approaching Basic in English language arts and/or mathematics is made by the LEA in accordance with the local Pupil Progression Plan.

School Choice Policies

Districts with Academically Unacceptable schools in Corrective Actions Level II or any school in Corrective Actions Level III must provide parents and students in their district a school choice plan. The plan offers students the opportunity to transfer to a higher performing school. If no Academically Acceptable school in the district is available, the student may transfer to a neighboring district. However, the parents are responsible for transportation, and schools and districts may refuse to accept students if there is insufficient space, if a desegregation order prevents transfer, or if the student has been subjected to disciplinary actions for behavioral problems. The district's school choice policy must also identify additional resources provided to low-performing schools that are required to offer students a choice of schools.

Technical Assistance and Sanctions Added at Level III

Reconstitution Plan

In addition to all the aforementioned technical assistance programs, districts with schools in Level III Corrective Actions must develop a Reconstitution Plan. The plan is written during the first year a school is at level III and must be submitted to the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) for approval. The plan indicates how the district plans to remedy the school's inadequate growth in student performance, specifies how and what reorganization shall occur, and discusses how these proposed changes will lead to improved student performance. However, the plan is not implemented unless a school reaches a second year of inadequate growth at Level III. Schools failing to meet at least 40 percent of their growth target during the first year at Level III must implement the BESE approved Reconstitution Plan at the beginning of the next school year. If the BESE fails to approve the Reconstitution Plan and the school does not achieve required growth, the school forfeits all state funds.

The Role of the District

The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education views assistance to low-performing schools as the responsibility of the district first, then of the state. However, districts, along with local school boards, administrators, and teachers, are expected to put forth extensive efforts beyond what is explicitly required by the state to improve student achievement in low-performing schools. Table 7 delineates the responsibilities of the school, district, and state at each level of Corrective Actions.

The BESE recently approved "in concept" a district accountability plan. Under the plan districts will receive a label based upon a District Responsibility Index (DRI) that includes the following components: summer school attendance, changes in LEAP 21 first-time passing rates; changes in schools' SPS relative to growth targets; and percentage of certified teachers. Similar to the School Performance Score, districts will receive labels based on their DRI. To date, the labels, but not the criteria for each, have been determined: Excellent, Very Good,

Table 7. Responsibilities of State, District, and School in Regard to Corrective Actions: Louisiana Department of Education

Level	State Responsibilities	District Responsibilities	School Responsibilities
Level I	Provide diagnostic process (SAM)	Create DAT to assist schools	Use SAM to identify needs
	Provide training for DAT teams	Reassign or remove school personnel as necessary	Develop or revise School Improvement Plan
	Work to secure new funding and/or redirect existing resources	Ensure schools receive proportional share of funding	
Level II	Assign DEs to schools	DAT teams work with schools	Implement School Improvement Plan
	Work to secure new funding and/or redirect existing resources to help schools	Hold public hearing and respond to DE recommendations	DE works with principal to develop capacity for change
Level III	Assign DE to schools for one additional year	DAT teams continue to work with schools	DE continues to assist with improvement efforts
	Evaluate Reconstitution Plans	Design Reconstitution Plan	Implement approved Reconstitution Plan
	Work to secure new funding and/or redirect existing resources to help schools	Develop a school choice policy	

Good, Poor, and Unsatisfactory. Districts will also receive a "District Performance Score" that is an average of all the School Performance Scores in the district.

Monitoring and Evaluation

District Assistance Teams are to assist schools in Corrective Action Level I in monitoring the implementation of the School Improvement Plans. In addition, all Corrective Action I schools are required to submit a quarterly report and an end-of-year evaluation on the implementation of their school improvement plans to the Louisiana Department of Education. Corrective Action II schools are required to adhere to the same regulations as Level I schools with the addition of a *Monthly Monitoring of the Implementation of the School Improvement Plan* submitted to the Department of Education. If a Level III school is required to implement a Reconstitution Plan, a distinguished educator is assigned to the school for an additional year to assist the state in monitoring the implementation of that plan.

Maryland

Maryland was one of the first states to undertake standards-based reforms. In 1990, before the 1994 Title I statute, the state implemented the Maryland School Performance Program that included standards for what students should know and be able to do, criterion-referenced tests aligned with the standards, and a system of rewards and sanctions based on school performance. The cornerstone of the system, the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program, has been hailed as one of the best state assessments in the country. The State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education have enjoyed strong political support for education reform efforts that, over time, have included additional resources and support for low-performing schools. While Maryland School Performance Assessment and National Assessment of Educational Progress scores have been improving statewide, a significant achievement gap still exists between the state's wealthier and lower-income schools and districts. Recent state initiatives have been aimed at decreasing the achievement gap, particularly in Baltimore City, one of the state's poorest districts.

State Assessment System

The Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) tests were intended to measure school rather than individual student performance. As such, beginning in March 2003, a new assessment in reading and mathematics will be administered to Maryland students. Third, fifth and eighth graders statewide will be given the Maryland School Assessment in reading and mathematics while tenth graders will be given the Maryland School Assessment in reading only.[10] Like the MSPAP, which it replaces, the new test will provide an assessment of school wide progress. However, unlike its predecessor, this test will also produce individual student scores. The Maryland School Assessment will provide students, parents, and teachers with two sets of scores on a report sent to the home of each student. One set, known as criterion-referenced scores, will assess the student's performance when measured against the state standards in reading and math. The other set of scores, known as norm-referenced, will compare the student's performance with other students nationally. Test results also will provide information to administrators on each school's performance, determining progress toward annual goals. The test meets the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The Maryland Functional Tests, developed in the 1980s, are in the process of being replaced by the High School Assessments (HSA), which are linked to the Maryland content standards. In 2001-2002 for the first time students in grade 9 took end-of-course HSAs as they completed corresponding courses in English I, government, algebra/data analysis, geometry, and biology. The HSAs contain short-essay, long-essay, and multiple-choice questions, all of which are based on the content outlined in Maryland's High School Core Learning Goals. Beginning in the fall 2003, students entering grade 9 will be required to pass the HSAs to graduate from high school. Students not passing a test will receive assistance from their local school system and may retake the test.

Results from the state assessments are reported for state, local school system, and school levels in the Maryland School Performance Report.[11] For the 1999-2000 school year, publicly reported assessment results were disaggregated at the state and local school system level by gender, race/ethnicity, and regular or special education status. At the school level, data are disaggregated by gender and race/ethnicity only.

Accountability System

The School Performance Index (SPI) is the measure of performance for all schools. The variables included in the SPI are different for each level of schooling: at the elementary level, attendance and grade 3 and 5 MSPAP results are included; middle school includes attendance, grade 8 MSPAP and Maryland functional test results; and in high school, attendance, dropout rate, and composite results of grade 9 and 11 Maryland Functional Tests are included. School test results are either

[10] As part of its new assessment program, Maryland also will institute a new look at achievement levels of early readers. The Reading First program, funded with federal dollars, will focus on students in kindergarten through third grade in eligible local school systems.

[11] The Maryland School Performance Report is available online: http://msp.msde.state.md.us/

- Satisfactory – 70 percent of students scoring at proficiency level 3 or above, or
- Excellent – 70 percent of students scoring at level 3 or above, with at least 25 percent of students at level 2 or higher.

The SPI is the weighted average of a school's relative distance from the Satisfactory criteria. A SPI of 100 indicates a school is meeting standards, or has earned a Satisfactory label. To be rated as Satisfactory and to receive a SPI of 100, schools must have at least 70 percent of students performing satisfactorily on the state assessments, and have at least 94 percent attendance for elementary schools or less than 4 percent drop-out rate for high schools.

Identification of Low-Performing Schools

In 1993 the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted regulations allowing the state to reconstitute low-performing schools based on performance. Since that time, the state has identified low-performing schools and provided them with additional support and resources. Beginning in 1994, the SBE began identifying schools showing a continuous pattern of low performance as reconstitution-eligible, now referred to as local reconstitution. Currently, 105 schools are under local reconstitution. Eighty-five of these schools are in Baltimore City. Of all schools under local reconstitution, eight are high schools, 29 are middle schools, and 68 are elementary schools. Four additional schools moved from local to state-directed reconstitution, the most intense level of assistance for low-performing schools.

Schools are targeted for assistance based on their School Performance Index (SPI). School reconstitution represents the primary means of state intervention for schools not progressing toward state standards; however, schools performing below standards but not under local reconstitution also have access to additional support from the state.

Local reconstitution is a probationary period during which schools and districts are given the opportunity to improve while being monitored and assisted by the state. State reconstitution is direct state intervention and typically occurs only after a school under local reconstitution fails to make satisfactory progress toward state standards. There are general rather than absolute numerical parameters for identification of schools for local reconstitution, thus allowing for leeway by the SBE in the identification of schools. Currently, a school is eligible for state reconstitution if it is "below Satisfactory and declining" or below Satisfactory and not making "substantial and sustained" improvement after the implementation of a school improvement plan. Local school systems with high numbers of low-performing schools are identified through the accountability system. These school systems—called *Critical Mass* systems—are local school systems in which 25 percent or more of the schools are under local or state reconstitution. Table 8 details the criteria for each level of reconstitution.

Table 8: Criteria for Reconstitution: Maryland State Department of Education

Category	Criteria
Local Reconstitution	Below Satisfactory and declining or below Satisfactory and not making "substantial and sustained" improvement
State Reconstitution	A school under local reconstitution fails to make satisfactory progress toward meeting standards
Critical Mass System	25 percent or more of schools in a system are under local or state reconstitution

In addition to resources and support for low-performing schools, Maryland provides rewards to schools that show substantial improvement. The School Performance Recognition Program allows bonuses to each school that shows significant gains for two consecutive years or consistent improvement for three years with significant gains in the most recent year.

Funding Resources for Support to Low-Performing Schools

Since the mid 1990s, Maryland has been operating a variety of initiatives and programs supported by state and federal funds aimed at improving school performance. In one initiative, school systems with schools under local reconstitution are awarded funds. The state monitors these schools while providing additional assistance and resources. The local school system then uses the funds to initiate school reforms aligned with district goals. In another program, the Maryland State Department of Education selected the first schools to receive grants through the Schools for Success Challenge Grant Program. Grants of $100,000 were awarded to Challenge schools, identified as low performing or that meet other criteria, such as high student mobility or a high concentration of limited English proficient students.

In addition, funds from federal programs are targeted to low-performing schools. In 1998 the passage of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program provided funds to low-performing schools willing to adopt research-based reform models. Also in 1998 the Maryland General Assembly established the School Accountability Funding for Excellence (SAFE) program,

providing $186 million in statewide funding over a four-year period (1999-2002). These funds are targeted to at-risk students in all schools statewide, not just low-performing schools. To receive funds under SAFE, the local school system must develop a comprehensive plan that integrates funding from state, federal, and local programs targeting at-risk students with the goal of providing a more comprehensive and coordinated education program. The plan must describe the measures and processes the local school system will use to evaluate change in student performance.

Technical Assistance for Low-Performing Schools

The primary focus of state technical assistance is on schools under local reconstitution. However, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) also targets assistance to schools not meeting state standards but not under local reconstitution. The MSDE draws on funds from various federal and state programs to specific groups of schools to create a tiered system of support to low-performing schools. This strategy creates a continuum of support. Schools performing at the lowest levels receive the most intensive support while schools performing just below standards receive less intensive support. The state works directly with schools through the CSRD program, the Challenge school program, and local reconstitution. In addition to state support, districts with schools in local reconstitution are responsible for developing district-level plans for supporting and working with these schools (See table 9).

In June 2002 MSDE formed a cross-divisional work group consisting of individuals from various divisions to review and improve the system of school support to low-performing, high-poverty schools. The team reviewed school support models for low-performing schools from Kentucky, Texas, and North Carolina, as well as Maryland's reconstitution office, the Title I school support team, and the career technology initiatives. The work group analyzed the components of each model noting their strengths and determining how these components could best be adapted into a state school support model. The goal is to offer support to low-performing, high-poverty schools in a manner that will not duplicate efforts while reaching the schools in greatest need.

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program

The least intensive support is provided through the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD)

Table 9. State, District, School Responsibilities for Supporting Low-Performing Schools: Maryland State Department of Education

Program	State Responsibilities	District Responsibilities	School Responsibilities
CSRD	Provide a 3-step technical assistance program to help schools through the application process; conduct onsite visits to monitor CSR initiative; provide technical assistance and annual leadership conference for school improvement teams.	Submit a system plan on how the district will support the school as part of the each school's CSR application.	Attend state orientation and planning meetings to prepare CSR program prior to submitting competitive application; submit application using state guidelines; submit annual reports of progress toward meeting CSR goals and objectives.
Challenge Schools	Review school improvement plan; monitor implementation of the plan; and provide technical assistance.	Develop a plan on how the district will support the school.	Submit a school improvement plan to MSDE detailing areas of need and plans for improvement.
Local Recons-titution	Onsite review of schools; review of school plan by SBE; monitor implementation of the plan by MSDE; and provide technical assistance and resources.	Develop a plan on how the district will support the newly named school.	Submit a school improvement plan to MSDE detailing areas of need and plans for improvement.
State Recons-titution	Monitor arrangement with third party contractor through benchmarking process.	Provide per pupil expenditure funding; meet other contract requirements.	Meet quarterly benchmarks and all other contract specifications.
Critical Mass System	Onsite review of local reconstitution schools; monitor implementation of Master Plan; provide technical assistance and resources.	Develop a Master Plan.	

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program. CSRD grant awards target low-performing, high-poverty schools. Targeted schools are invited to participate in three application/technical assistance workshops that focus on preparation to implement a comprehensive school reform model. The technical assistance workshops include assistance with completing a needs assessment, matching identified school needs with a comprehensive school reform model, and completing the CSRD application. Schools are identified as eligible for funding based on evaluation of the application. A team from MSDE then visits eligible schools to make the final determinations for awards. MSDE awarded grants to 18 schools in the first year of implementation (1998-1999). In the second year of implementation, (2001-2002), 35 schools applied and nine schools received grants. The remaining funds were used for a second round of awards. Of the 26 schools not funded through the first round (2001-2002), 11 schools submitted improved applications and were awarded. For the next round (2002-2003), 26 schools submitted applications and 20 were awarded. All schools getting awards receive on-going support from MSDE as they implement their comprehensive school reform plans. Another comprehensive school reform program request for proposal was released to local school systems in September 2002 with the expectation of 10 awards in the spring of 2003.

Challenge School Initiative

The next level of support is provided through the Challenge School Initiative (CSI). MSDE, in consultation and concurrence with the local school system, selects schools to receive Challenge grants. Elementary schools with a SPI of 35.5 to 40 and middle schools with an SPI of 65.5 to 70 are targeted for assistance through this program. Schools applying for CSI funding must submit a school improvement plan that follows a process established by MSDE. The plan must include evidence of need, selection of a research-based comprehensive reform model that matches school needs, an action plan, a professional development plan, and a management plan. Schools receive assistance from MSDE during development of the plan. The initiative currently requires a one-year plan, but the state is hoping to require schools to develop a three-year plan with annual updates. In 2001-2002 MSDE planned 16 site visits to Challenge schools to evaluate their progress and to identify best practices. One high-performing school and one low-performing school in each local school system receiving Challenge funds will be visited. Lessons learned from these schools will inform MSDE about best practices and state strategies for assisting other low-performing schools.

Each Challenge school currently receives approximately $100,000. Funds provided under CSI pay for additional teachers, classroom assistants, professional development and staff training, instructional technology, and the promotion of effective instructional strategies. Through the 1999-2000 school year, 93 percent of Challenge schools had adopted comprehensive school reform designs.

Local Reconstitution

The State Board of Education (SBE) has identified schools for local reconstitution since 1994. Schools eligible for local reconstitution are those schools performing below state standards and declining or not showing "substantial and sustained improvement." Essentially a probationary model, local reconstitution schools remain under district control, but benefit from increased state monitoring, technical assistance, and funding. Schools stay in local reconstitution until they achieve the state average SPI. If schools fail to make satisfactory progress toward standards, the SBE may move the school into state reconstitution.

Each January the SBE identifies new schools to be put under local reconstitution. After these schools have been notified, a state team conducts a site visit. The site visit team consists of MSDE staff from various divisions trained to complete a needs assessment. Data is collected from a wide range of sources: from staff (including custodial and cafetena) questionnaires focused on the school culture and the instructional program to interviews with students and parents. At the end of the visit, the team presents an informal oral report to the staff. At a later date, a formal written report is completed and sent to the school district. The school staff bases the development or revision of their school improvement plan on the presentation and report. The criteria for improvement plans are very specific. After the plan is approved by the local school system and MSDE, the state assigns technical assistants to the school to assure the plan will be ready for implementation at the start of the next school year.

A state instructional monitoring team conducts visits to each school under local reconstitution. The visit provides each school with a picture of their instructional program at that time.

A team of state technical assistants works directly with the schools to provide support. With newly named schools identified in January, technical assistance teams can begin working with schools at the beginning of the following school year. The current teams include one high school team with four members, two middle school teams with seven members, and four elementary school teams with 18 members. Retired educators, such as teachers, principals, and district and state administrators, comprise the primary team members. The technical assistance teams and local school system school improvement personnel meet monthly, and professional development activities are included in those meetings.

Information obtained during the site visit, audit reports, and conversations with the principal and school

staff guides focus of the technical assistance. For example, high school technical assistants use a technique referred to as "Think Abouts" to provide school staff an opportunity to reflect on their practice and the kinds of supports they feel are needed. The information gained from these sessions informs decisions about the type and structure of technical assistance provided. Types of assistance typically provided include

- Assisting in the development of the school improvement plan
- Monitoring the development and implementation of the school improvement plan
- Observing instruction and providing feedback to principals
- Coordinating staff development opportunities
- Providing materials

An important role of the technical assistants is to work with principals in developing and improving their skills in the area of instruction. Technical assistants work with schools as long as the school is under local reconstitution. The majority of schools have been under local reconstitution for three to five years. As a result, technical assistants have had the time to develop strong relationships with the schools and provide long-term, comprehensive support as they implement school improvement strategies.

State Reconstitution

When schools under local constitution fail to make adequate progress, they are placed under state reconstitution. On July 1, 2000, after a nationally conducted competitive process, Edison Schools, Inc. assumed management of the three lowest performing elementary schools in Baltimore City. Edison re-staffed the schools and implemented two comprehensive school reform models, "Success for All," a phonics-based reading program developed through Johns Hopkins University, and "Chicago Math," as well as programs in technology, art, music, physical education, and Spanish. Teachers and students were grouped into instructional "houses" to support improved monitoring and delivery of instruction. Common teacher planning time was included in the new school schedule. In addition, both the school year and the school day were extended. Edison students attend school for up to 8 hours a day compared to the 6.5-hour day in most city schools, and the school year is 195 days compared to the city's 180-day school year. The state carefully oversees the Edison contract and school operations, monitoring detailed performance measures that Edison is expected to meet.

In January 2001, through a contract between the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) and Victory Schools, Inc., a fourth school was moved to state reconstitution for failure to progress with standards. BCPSS restaffed the school. Victory continued the Direct Instruction reading and math programs and core knowledge adding art, music, physical education, and Spanish. The school incorporated an extended day and weekly early release time for professional development. BCPSS is responsible for monitoring the school's progress with some additional involvement of the state. Again the contract includes performance measures that Victory is expected to meet.

Critical Mass Districts

School districts with 25 percent or more of their schools in local or state reconstitution are labeled Critical Mass Districts and are required to develop a Master Plan outlining a long-range, coordinated plan for improving student achievement in the district. The four-year plan must include goals, objectives, strategies, and evaluation procedures and must be updated annually. The technical assistants assigned to schools in the district work with schools to align their school improvement plans to the Master Plan. The Master Plan must be updated annually. In addition, every October 15, critical mass districts are required to submit a plan for the recruitment of teachers.

City-State Partnership

Nearly half of the BCPSS schools are under local and state reconstitution, comprising 83 percent of the state's schools in those categories. While other local school systems with fewer schools in reconstitution have the capacity to shift funds and resources to address the needs of lower performing schools, systems such as BCPSS face a greater challenge in addressing the needs of a large number of low-performing schools. To address those challenges, in 1997 the Maryland General Assembly established a City-State Partnership with Baltimore City. The partnership, established by Senate Bill 795, was designed to promote education reforms in the BCPSS. The law required that the district dissolve the local school board and establish the New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. The governor and the mayor selected members of the new board from nominations provided by the SBE.

The chief executive officer is responsible for the management and accountability of the BCPSS as well as for the development and implementation of a Master Plan focused on improving student achievement. The Master Plan is a long term agenda for reform and addresses a variety of issues: reorganization of the central office; a citywide curriculum framework reflecting state learning outcomes; an effective program for professional development and training for staff; an effective educational program for meeting the needs of students at risk of failure; effective management information systems; increased parental participation; and an effective system of teacher input regarding implementation of reform initiatives. In addition to the chief executive officer, the Master Plan created positions

for a chief financial officer, a research and evaluation unit, and a parent and community advisory board. To align the functions and responsibilities of district staff, the Master Plan added other new positions, including a human resources staff person to coordinate teacher recruitment efforts.

The Baltimore City Public School System Master Plan focuses on two long-term goals: establishment of an effective management system and improved student achievement. To reach these goals, the plan laid out six supporting objectives:

- Increase student achievement pre-K through grade 12
- Provide students with qualified and competent teachers and principals
- Comply fully with federal and state laws governing the education of students with disabilities
- Design and implement effective and cost efficient management systems and practices to improve instructional support
- Increase the level of parent, family, community, and business involvement
- Provide secure, civil, and orderly environments

The legislature initially allotted $250 million over five years to BCPSS, but the law allowed BCPSS to request additional funds to support Master Plan efforts. Thus, an additional $33.8 million was provided for FY2001 and $55 million for FY2002.

Since the partnership's implementation in 1997, BCPSS has implemented numerous strategies aimed at improving district management: closing underutilized buildings, restructuring the central office, separating the school system from the city government, and targeting resources for Master Plan initiatives. Using the Master Plan, BCPSS establishes a set of priority initiatives on which to focus resources for a particular school year. All available funds are committed to these initiatives, and progress toward implementation of the initiatives is measured through benchmarks.

Under the partnership, the district was required to develop a plan for the more efficient use of facilities and to restructure the central office. As a result, in 2000 the city closed seven schools, and the district central office was reorganized. To facilitate more efficient management, the schools in the district were reorganized into seven areas. Schools are grouped according to the kinds of support they need.

- Area 1: Higher performing elementary schools
- Area 2: Elementary schools that have shown some progress
- Area 3: Elementary schools implementing the Direct Instruction model and additional elementary schools not meeting state standards
- Area 4: The first schools placed under local reconstitution as well as additional schools whose performance has been declining
- Area 5: Middle schools
- Area 6: High schools
- Area 7: Chief executive officer's (CEO) area

Schools in the CEO's area implement reform initiatives meant to serve as a model of innovation for the entire district and to help shape and guide future initiatives in the strategic planning process. This restructuring groups together schools that require similar kinds of supports.

These efforts complement the second major goal of the Master Plan, improving student achievement. The initiatives developed to improve student achievement are varied. The early focus of the plan was primarily on reading and mathematics in the elementary grades. Other initiatives included a promotion policy, student supports, class size reduction, teacher quality, and improved communication with parents.

The district promotion policy is aimed at ending social promotion. As a part of the policy, a variety of safety nets or interventions were also developed to provide students with the assistance and support needed to meet promotion requirements. These programs include reading and math interventions, after-school tutoring, and summer school.

A wide array of programs aimed at improving teacher quality have been implemented: additional staff persons were hired to reduce class sizes in grades 4 and 5 in locally reconstituted schools; the district raised starting salaries for teachers; a performance-based evaluation system for teachers was developed; and a variety of targeted in-school teacher support programs were launched. The district hired reading coaches for 100 elementary schools. One reading teacher for every 400 students was placed in every middle school to provide assistance and support to teachers. Mathematics and science support teachers were also hired for all 68 local reconstitution elementary schools. Additional staff persons were hired to reduce class size in grades 4 and 5 in locally reconstituted schools. Other elementary schools have master teachers who, in addition to other responsibilities, are available for coaching. In addition, every new teacher in the system has an in-school mentor.

District and state officials, as well as the independent evaluator hired in 2001, report numerous positive outcomes from this partnership. MSPAP and CTBS scores have risen slowly, but steadily. Since 1994 about two-thirds of the schools in local reconstitution have improved their test scores and three schools have been removed from the list altogether. BCPSS staff also report that principals have a better understanding of the central office's expectations and they feel that the City-State Partnership and the Master Plan have resulted in a more cohesive and coherent school system.

The Role of the District

Districts with schools under local reconstitution retain management of the schools, but each school is provided with support and resources from the state. The district is responsible for approving school improvement plans for local reconstitution schools and working with state technical assistants to provide assistance to the schools.

Each Critical Mass district is required to develop a long-range Master Plan for improving its school system. The plan provides coordination and focus for major initiatives and must include goals, objectives, and strategies based upon the results of a comprehensive needs assessment. The plan also must include statements of expected results for each objective and procedures for monitoring implementation of the defined strategies.

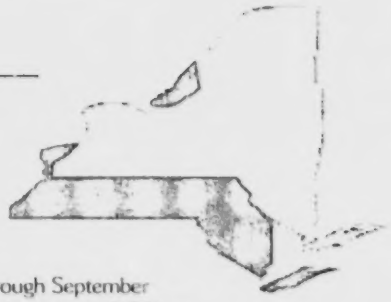
Monitoring and Evaluation

The state conducts regular audits of schools under local reconstitution. If the auditing process uncovers that the school improvement plan is not being implemented in a timely or appropriate manner, the school may be placed under state reconstitution.

As part of the City-State Partnership, an outside consultant conducted an interim review of the Baltimore City Public School System in 2000; a final evaluation was completed in December 2001.[12] The findings were presented to the governor, mayor, General Assembly, and local school boards. The independent evaluator concluded that, under the City-State Partnership, BCPSS has provided a more effective and efficient educational system for its students and that the gap in student performance continues to narrow between Baltimore city students and their statewide peers. Based on this report and recommendations of the State Board and the BCPSS Board of School Commissioners, the General Assembly passed legislation in the 2002 session to renew the City-State Partnership for five more years.

[12] Baltimore City Public Schools, in cooperation with the Maryland State Department of Education, selected Westat, a research firm specializing in program evaluation and survey research, to conduct the final evaluation.

New York



Over the past decade, New York has moved from a set of standards and assessments based on minimum competency requirements to those that require students to demonstrate proficiency in core academic subjects. The 2001 edition of *Quality Counts*, published by *Education Week*, named New York as one of only two states to receive an "A" for its standards, assessment, and accountability system. For more than 10 years, assistance provided to Schools Under Registration Review, those farthest from state standards, has been the most visible aspect of New York's support to low-performing schools. However, recent changes in the support system have broadened the range of state strategies to address schools performing at various levels of low performance, not just those farthest from meeting state standards. The new support system includes Regional School Support Centers that work collaboratively with SED School Improvement Liaisons to coordinate regional services and resources available to low-performing schools and districts.

State Assessment System

In 1995 New York began a reform process that included the development of curriculum standards, assessments aligned to those standards, a system of reporting progress toward the standards, and a process for identifying low-performing schools for assistance. The overarching intent was to improve educational achievement for all students. The state's Learning Standards, defining what students should know and be able to do, were released in 1996, and the new state tests were first administered in 1998-1999. The Pupil Evaluation Program tests in grades 3 and 6 mathematics and reading, and the Preliminary Competency Tests for grades 8 or 9 reading and writing, were replaced by new tests. Currently, in grades 4 and 8, English language arts and mathematics tests focus on moving students from competency, the emphasis of the old system, to proficiency. The Regency Competency Tests (high school tests) are being phased out during 1999-2004. Students who entered grade 9 in 2001 will be the first class required to pass with a score of 65 in five Regents examinations (English, mathematics, global history and geography, United States history and government, and science). However, students with disabilities who enter ninth grade through September 2004 may continue to use RCTs as a safety net. The safety net allows students with disabilities who fail a required Regents examination to satisfy state test requirements for a local diploma by passing the corresponding RCT. Additionally, there is an alternate assessment for those students with severe cognitive disabilities who are determined to be unable to participate in the regular assessment system as identified by their Committee on Special Education (IEP Team).

Student performance on the grade 4 and 8 assessments is reported in four levels based on their scores on the state test (see Table 10).

Table 10: Student Performance Designations: New York State Education Department

Performance Level	Definition
Level 4	Exceeds standards and is moving toward high performance on the Regents examination
Level 3	Meets standards, and with continued growth, should pass the Regents examination
Level 2	Needs extra help to meet standards and pass the Regents examination
Level 1	Has serious academic difficulties

Accountability System

In May 2000 the Board of Regents adopted a System of Accountability for Student Success (SASS), which expanded on the New York State Education Department's program of registration review.[13] The SASS provided for the establishment of school performance designations and Adequate Yearly Progress targets. The new accountability system includes two categories of low performance and, currently, one category for schools that meet standards. At the elementary and middle school levels, the SASS standards

[13] Since 1989 the New York State Education Department has provided support to schools placed under registration review. These are schools that are performing far below state standards.

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for school performance are based on state English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments, and at the high school level on the ELA and mathematics graduation assessment requirements, in addition to the annual dropout rate. The SASS standards define acceptable school performance on these measures. Based on these standards, schools are designated as *farthest from standards*, *below standards*, or *meeting standards* (see Table 11).

Table 11: School Performance Designations: New York State Education Department

School Performance Designation	Criteria (2001-2)
Meeting Standards	Performance Index of 145 for grades 4 and 8; 90 percent of high school cohort meeting graduation assessment requirements; and annual dropout rate of less than five percent for high schools
Below Standards	Performance Index below 145; fewer than 90 percent of high school cohort meting graduation assessment requirements; an annual dropout rate of greater than 5 percent
Farthest from Standards	Performance Index of below 80 in grade 4 English language arts; below 50 for grade 8 math; fewer than 58 percent of cohort meeting graduation assessment requirements; dropout rate exceeding 9 percent

The primary measure of elementary and middle school performance is the Performance Index, first used in 1999-2000 to determine school progress toward meeting state standards in ELA and mathematics. The Performance Index represents the percentage of full-year tested students who scored at Level 2 or above, and the percentage that scored at Level 3 or above on each of the elementary and middle-level assessments in ELA and mathematics. For example, if 70 percent of a school's students scored at Level 2 or above and 50 percent scored at Level 3 and above, that school's Performance Index would be 120. The Performance Index ranges from 0 to 200. For the 2001-2002 school year, to achieve state standards in grades 4 and 8 ELA and mathematics, a school is required to have a Performance Index of 145 or higher. The standards will be raised to 150 for 2002-2003. High schools must demonstrate that 90 percent of students in the cohort met the assessment requirements in ELA and mathematics and have a dropout rate of less than 5 percent.

Beginning in 1999-2000, the commissioner of education began establishing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets for each school below the state standard. These targets are set in three-year increments. An elementary and middle school is expected to close the gap between its current performance and the state standards by 15 percent each year. High schools are expected to have the performance of their current year cohort, which must meet rising graduation standards, meet or exceed the performance of the prior year's cohort. AYP targets determine whether schools have made progress and should receive recognition or are failing to make progress and need to develop improvement plans.

New York is currently engaged in a process of reviewing SASS to determine what changes will be necessary to ensure that the system complies with the new accountability requirements of NCLB. While New York hopes to retain much of its SASS system, certain provisions of NCLB, such as use of disaggregated data, will need to be incorporated into the system, and some elements of SASS may need to be adjusted to align with NCLB.

District Accountability for Students with Disabilities

In 1995 the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) redesigned its Quality Assurance review process to focus on program effectiveness and student results rather than procedural compliance. The Quality Assurance review process is now based on key performance indicators that form the basis of an accountability system for district performance for students with disabilities. These indicators include

- Percentage of students with disabilities participating in and percentage scoring at or above Level 3 on grade 4 and grade 8 for English language arts and mathematics examinations
- Participation rates and passing scores on Regents examinations in English and mathematics
- Percentage of students with disabilities earning a high school diploma
- Percentage of students with disabilities counted in the dropout rate
- Classification rate, including overrepresentation of minorities
- Percentage of students with disabilities integrated into regular education classes, including under representation of minorities
- Placement in separate settings, including overrepresentation of minorities
- Percentage of students with disabilities who have post-school plans
- Students with disabilities transition to postsecondary education and employment at the same rate as nondisabled peers

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School Report Cards

Since 1996 schools have been required to publish School Report Cards that provide assessment scores to the public. The 2001 School Report Cards included summaries of students, overall performance, performance by general education and special education status, and performance by subject area. Data was disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, and economic status beginning with the Report Card for the 2000-2001 school year.

Identification of Low-Performing Schools

Since the early 1990s New York has designated those schools that are farthest from state standards and judged to be most in need of improvement as Schools Under Registration Review (SURR). Schools labeled farthest from the standard are potential SURR schools. As of September 2002, 92 SURR schools, 70 of which are located in New York City, were currently SURR schools. The commissioner of education set the cutoff Performance Index (PI) rating for schools farthest from the standard. In 2000 the cutoff for grade 4 ELA and mathematics was a PI of 75. The cutoff for grade 8 ELA was 75 and for mathematics, 40. For 2001 the cutoff for grade 4 ELA and mathematics rose to 78. For Grade 8 ELA, it also rose to 78, and for grade 8 mathematics, it rose to 45. The commissioner is raising the criteria over time on what constitutes a school being labeled farthest from state standards. When establishing the criteria, the commissioner considers the resources available to the state and local districts to effectively undertake intensive school improvement efforts.

Schools that perform below state standards and subsequently fail to make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years are labeled as *Schools In Need of Improvement*. As of July 2001, 469 schools were In Need of Improvement. Non-Title I schools will be identified as schools In Need of Improvement for the first time following the 2001-2002 school year. If a Title I school In Need of Improvement fails to make adequate yearly progress two out of three years following identification, it becomes a *Corrective Action School*.

The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) and the Special Education Training and Resource Centers (SETRC) identify *Targeted Districts* to receive technical assistance aimed at improving outcomes for students with disabilities. Districts are identified through their participation in the Quality Assurance review process, State Improvement Grant, Chapter 405, Targeted Technical Assistance, and the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) process as well as districts' performance on the key performance indicators in the area of special education. Specific factors used in the identification process include

- Deficiencies with key performance indicators
- Low resource/high need district
- Existence of on-going initiatives coordinating with general education in the district
- Willingness to put good faith effort toward improving student outcomes

Table 12 delineates the categories of program improvement.

Table 12. Categories of Program Improvement, New York State Education Department

Category of Program Improvement	Criteria
Schools in Need of Improvement	Schools below state standards that fail to make AYP for two consecutive consecutive years
Corrective Action Schools	Title I Schools that fail to make AYP two out or three years following identification as a School in Need of Improvement
Schools Under Registration Review	Farthest from standards and most In need of improvement
Targeted Districts	Selection by VESID and SETRC staff

While the SASS indicators are school oriented, the VESID indicators are district oriented. The department also identifies districts as in need of improvement or places them in corrective action if the performance of their Title I schools is not acceptable. Special legislation passed in 2002 resulted in the removal of the Board of Trustees of the Roosevelt School District in Long Island and the placement of the district under the direct supervision of the commissioner.

Funding Resources for Low-Performing Schools

The funding to support services to low-performing schools comes from a combination of state and federal money. The state provides about $5,000 to SURR schools for planning grants, followed by approximately $50,000 for implementation of those plans. For the past several years, the department has annually provided $2 million to school districts that is specifically targeted to SURR schools. The department also ensures that SURR schools receive priority when districts implement such initiatives as the State funded Early Grade Reduced Class Size Program. In addition, districts often allocate their own resources to SURR

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schools. For example, in New York City it has been estimated that a school in the Chancellor's District receives an additional $1 million per year, mostly through the district.

Four funding streams support the Regional School Support Centers: Title I; Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program; New York State Effective Schools program; and IDEA. For 2000-2001 and 2001-2002, total annual allocations of $5.8 million have been established to support the Regional School Support Centers.

Technical Assistance to Low-Performing Schools

Schools Under Registration Review (SURR) receive the most intensive assistance, with each being assigned a liaison from the state education department. However, the state system includes other major programs that together create a broader set of strategies aimed at schools performing at various levels below state standards. Table 13 outlines each designation and the corresponding responsibilities. All districts must develop Local Assistance Plans for schools performing Below Standards. Schools identified as In Need of Improvement, in Corrective Action, or SURR receive assistance from the state and Regional School Support Centers (RSSC). Targeted districts receive support from the Special Education Training and Resource Centers (SETRC).

Regional School Support Centers

The Regional School Support Centers (RSSC) networks were established to provide services primarily to schools just above the farthest from state standards designation. However, RSSCs work with all schools identified through the state accountability system: SURR, schools in need of improvement, corrective action schools, and VESID targeted districts. The focus of the RSSCs is to build the capacity of school districts through a comprehensive set of services directed at the identification or diagnosis of the root causes of low performance. In addition, the development of appropriate interventions through comprehensive planning, coordination of network resources, technical assistance, and professional development is paramount. The services are provided by center staff and by other organizations and agencies in the region. RSSCs coordinate the services and resources to low-performing schools and districts by developing networks among organizations providing services and programs in their region. The center staff assists the district and/or school with data analysis and planning, identifying appropriate goals and measurable benchmarks, and coordinating services to address goals.

There are 10 Regional School Support Centers across the state that provide and coordinate technical assistance to low-performing schools. Nine centers

Table 13: State, District, and School Responsibilities for Supporting Low-Performing Schools: New York State Education Department

Category	State Responsibilities	District Responsibilities	School Responsibilities
Below Standards	In selected cases, may receive support form RSSC and SED liaisons	Develop a Local Assistance Plan	
Schools in Need of Improvement	Assistance provided through RSSCs and, in some cases, from SED liaisons	Develop a Local Assistance Plan; Implement program of school Year 2 Title I SINI; provide supplementary services	Conduct a data driven needs assessment; Develop a School Improvement Plan
Corrective Action Schools	Assistance provided through RSSCs and SED liaisons	Develop a Corrective Action Plan; Implement program of school choice and supplementary services; Other possible actions include decrease decision making at school, withhold funds, reconstitute school staff	
SURR	Conduct on-site registration review visit; assign SED liaison; provide additional funds; Assistance provided through NYSED	Corrective Action Plan	Comprehensive Education Plan
Targeted Districts	Assistance provided through SETRCs	Incorporate strategies to address identified issues into CSPD	

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operate through Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES),[14] while the New York City RSSC operates through the NYC Teacher Center. All of the RSSCs are governed by executive committees composed of the district superintendents in the region, a representative from higher education, a superintendent of any Big 4 school districts in the region,[15] and teachers. The role of the executive committee is to set goals and priorities for the center. Each center must also have an advisory council made up of district superintendents, a VESID Lifelong Services Network regional facilitator or SETRC Focus Committee representative, representatives from professional development and technical assistance networks in the region, parent representatives, county health and human services representatives, non-public school representatives, and representatives from community and business organizations. The role of the advisory council is to advise the executive committee on regional needs and existing resources, provide recommendations for appropriate services, and help coordinate resources to support low-performing schools.

Within the Office of Regional School and Community Services is the School Support Team. Team staff members monitor the work of the centers, work collaboratively with the centers in providing technical assistance in the region and provide technical assistance to center staff. This office is responsible for all centers, except NYC; however, the staff does coordinate with the NYC Regional School Support Center. The NYC Regional School Support Center is under the direction of the Office of New York City School and Community Services. The School Support Team of the Office of Regional School and Community Services is made up of three supervisors and nine regional liaisons. One staff person is assigned as a liaison to each region. Because the SASS and VESID indicators are heavily focused on reading and mathematics, the team also has two subject area specialists, one in English language arts and the other in mathematics. The specialists provide technical assistance and professional development to RSSC staff and targeted districts. The Office of New York City School and Community Services has 20 professionals whose focus is on providing support to the 70 New York City SURR schools as well as the more than 300 schools in improvement status in New York City.

The Regional School Support Centers have 40 staff members altogether. The centers employ from three to seven staff members in each region. Each of the centers is staffed with, at least, a planning specialist, an instructional specialist, and a special education specialist. The special education position within the RSSCs, funded through IDEA, is intended to establish a working partnership between the RSSCs and the Special Education Training and Resource Centers. Center staff also work with districts and schools to develop a memorandum of agreement that defines the services to be provided, responsibilities of each party, and timelines for support. The RSSC specialists use research-based approaches to work in partnership with school staff to agree upon target areas, the root causes for current performance, and needed interventions. RSSC specialists work with other regional partners such as mental health agencies, Teacher Centers, Special Education Training and Resource Centers, institutions of higher education, and others, to strategically identify and implement the various interventions needed in each targeted school and district.

Schools Under Registration Review

Schools Under Registration Review receive the most intensive technical assistance. Once a school is identified for registration review, an external team conducts a site visit to the school. The team consists of teachers, district staff, curriculum specialists, parents, and state education department staff, and is led by a district superintendent. During the visit, the team visits classrooms and interviews administrators, parents, teachers, and other school personnel. They collect data pertaining to instruction, curriculum, assessment, school management and leadership, professional qualifications and staff development, parent and community involvement, school discipline and safety, instructional materials, the physical plant, and district-level support for school improvement efforts. The external team produces a report to the school and district that includes recommendations for improvement.

The school district is required to develop a corrective action plan that addresses the recommendations of the review team. The plan must be developed in consultation with school staff, parents and community members and, for New York City schools governed by a community school board, the community school district superintendent and district-level staff. The plan is revised annually and submitted to the state education department for approval.

The school is required to develop a comprehensive education plan based on the district's corrective action plan. The school must develop the plan in collaboration

[14] 1948 state legislation authorized the establishment of a "board of cooperative educational services (BOCES) for the purpose of carrying out a program of shared educational services in the schools of the supervisory district." Currently, there are 38 supervisory districts in New York with a BOCES located in each. All but 12 of the 703 operating school districts are members of BOCES. The five city districts, each with a population over 125,000, are not eligible to join a BOCES. Since 1948, the array of services provided by BOCES has increased. All BOCES currently operate programs in six service areas: occupational education; special education; itinerant services; general education; instructional support; and non-instructional support.

[15] The Big 4 districts are Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers.

with New York Education Department staff and others assigned by the department, including the district superintendent who led the review of the school. The comprehensive education plan is also revised annually and submitted to the education department for approval. Schools and districts receive additional funds to support the planning and implementation of these improvement plans.

The Office of New York City School and Community Services oversees and coordinates assistance to SURR schools. Approximately 25 staff members from the Office of New York City School and Community Services and the Office of School Improvement Services, which provides assistance to schools outside of New York City, are assigned to districts and SURR schools as liaisons. Liaisons are usually assigned to three or four schools, or to a school and a district, to monitor the implementation of the district and school plans. They provide technical assistance to the district and the school and help coordinate the efforts of the education department and the school district. The liaison may assist school staff in preparation for the review visit and in developing school and district plans, provide information and guidance in implementing the plan, identify professional development and funding opportunities, and assist in identifying appropriate research-based school improvement models.

The education department works with various affiliated networks, such as the Teacher Centers, to provide support for SURR schools and professional development to teachers, administrators, and parents through such efforts as

- The collaboration with the New York Technical Assistance Center (NYTAC) at New York University providing curriculum-based parent training and support to hundreds of parents from SURR schools
- The Harvard Leadership Institute Programs and Principal Leadership Institutes for administrators of SURR schools
- Reading and mathematics institutes for staff in SURR schools
- Technical assistance to SURR schools in developing applications for state-funded learning technology grants
- Parents as Curriculum Partners training

The state education department has also engaged the services of content standards and assessment consultants to work in selected intermediate, middle, and junior high schools. These consultants provide professional development in research-based reading and mathematics programs; coach and model effective in-class instructional strategies; and assist school staff in understanding how to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state standards.

Moreover, in New York City, the chancellor has created the Chancellor's District to provide intensive support and oversight to those SURR schools with the greatest needs. Schools in the Chancellor's District receive, on average, an infusion of more than $1 million annually in additional resources. Among the key elements of the Chancellor's District model are extensive staff development opportunities, reduced class sizes, and an extended school day.

Special Education Training and Resource Centers

Special Education Training and Resource Centers (SETRC) staff members are trained as coaches and facilitators to work with Targeted Districts, which are those that need to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, through the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) planning process.[16] SETRC staff members facilitate the process by helping district and school staff understand and interpret data, identify root causes of issues identified in the data, and develop appropriate measurable goals and benchmarks for professional development. All Targeted Districts must incorporate strategies for addressing identified issues into their CSPD plans. SETRC staff members also offer content-specific training in areas of special education. The Office of Vocational and Education Services for Individuals with Disabilities oversees and coordinates the work of the Special Education Training and Resource Centers.

The SETRC network consists of 42 regional centers statewide located in Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) areas or large cities and includes approximately 125 staff. SETRC staff spend 80 percent of their time working with the Targeted Districts in their region. A significant portion of their time is spent working with districts so they can provide long-term, sustained professional development opportunities. The SETRC network is evaluated through targeted district progress on identified goals and expected outcomes.

[16] States are required to develop a CSPD to ensure an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation personnel. The CSPD must include plans for recruitment and retention of qualified staff, personnel standards, a staff development plan, and a performance evaluation system.

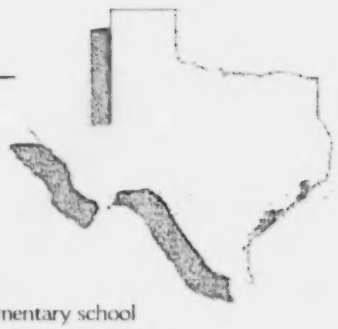
The Role of the District

Districts are required to assist each school performing below the state standard. The district must develop a Local Assistance Plan that specifies how it will modify instructional programs and redirect resources to help schools meet state standards. The plan is developed by the superintendent in consultation with the school community and must be approved by the board of education. Districts must also develop annual professional development plans linked to the standards. For SURR schools, districts must develop Corrective Action Plans that identify the specific support that the district will provide to assist the school to meet its performance targets. The Corrective Action Plan is intended to address issues that are impeding the school's performance that are beyond the capacity of the school to address.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The New York State Education Department monitors district and school progress toward successful implementation of districts' corrective action plans and the schools' comprehensive education plans. A School Under Registration Review is initially given up to three full academic years to demonstrate improved student performance. If sufficient progress is not made during that time, the State Commissioner of Education may recommend to the Board of Regents that the school's registration be revoked.

Texas



Texas has received a great deal of national attention for improved student achievement, particularly among low-income and minority students. The state has experienced large increases in passing rates across all grade levels and subject areas on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), with the most dramatic gains made by low-income and minority students. Data from the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) show significant and sustained improvement since 1990. Credit for the progress made in Texas has been given primarily to the structure of the accountability system that highlights the achievement gap by reporting scores by student subgroups, and pushed campuses[17] and districts to attend to the academic success of all groups of students in all subject areas. A frequently overlooked component of the Texas system is the support and assistance provided to districts and campuses identified as low performing.

The Texas system of support is centered on its 20 regional Education Service Centers (ESC). The Texas Education Agency defines policy and policy expectations, while the regional Education Service Centers are responsible for providing assistance to districts and schools. The state does not provide supplemental support directly to low-performing schools but provides resources to the Education Service Centers to give technical assistance to all districts and schools, particularly those rated as low performing. There are a number of state agency departments that work with the ESCs to develop plans for working with low-performing schools. These include Finance and Support Systems; Quality, Compliance and Accountability Reviews; Accountability, Reporting and Research; Special Populations (Student Support Programs, Migrant); and Curriculum, Assessment, and Technology.

State Assessment System

The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), which was designed to test knowledge of the state curriculum, has been in place since 1990. In 1995 Senate Bill 1 laid out a governance system defined by local control, with accountability and authority given to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to clarify essential knowledge and skills. In 1997, the TEA introduced the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) state curriculum guidelines delineating what students from elementary school through high school should know and be able to do. Following the introduction of the TEKS, the TAAS was modified to align with it.

Since 1990 the grades and subject areas tested by the TAAS have changed; however, since 1994 the TAAS has been administered regularly in reading and mathematics to students in grades 3 through 8 and in writing for students in grades 4 and 8. And since 1991 grade 10 students must pass reading, mathematics, and writing before graduating from high school. The TAAS is also administered in Spanish in grades 3 through 6 for students in bilingual programs. Students in English as a Second Language programs must take the English version of the TAAS.

In 1999 the Texas legislature mandated the development of a new testing program to be aligned more closely with the TEKS. The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) will become the statewide assessment program in 2003. Also beginning in 2003, decisions about grade-level promotion in some grades will be based on TAKS performance. The class of 2005 will be required to pass a new exit test, also based on the TAKS, in order to graduate from high school.

Accountability System

Texas was among the first states to hold students and schools accountable for student performance on state tests. In 1993 the Texas legislature mandated the creation of the Texas Public School Accountability System to accredit school districts and rate campuses. Under the accountability system, schools and districts are rated according to the proportion of students who pass the TAAS with all schools held to the same standards, regardless of Title I status. The four campus ratings (Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable, or Low Performing) and four district ratings (Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable, or Academically Unacceptable) are based primarily on the percentage of students passing the TAAS, but dropout and attendance rates also factor in the ratings.

[17] In Texas, schools are referred to as "campuses." This report will use both terms interchangeably.

The commissioner of education sets the TAAS standards within the parameters specified in the state statute for each rating category. The standards were designed to phase in increasingly higher expectations for districts and campuses. In 1995, instead of initially setting targets very high, Texas set the bar for Acceptable just above the state average. It then raised the target five points each year (See Table 14). In addition, since 2000-2001 at least 50 percent of all students and 50 percent of each student group (African American, Hispanic, white, and economically disadvantaged) that meet minimum size[18] must pass each section of the TAAS for the school to be rated as Acceptable or better. Prior to 2002, for campuses or districts to be rated Academically Acceptable/Acceptable, the dropout rate had to be at 6 percent or below and overall attendance at 94 percent or above. For 2002 the dropout rate standard for Recognized was lowered to 2.5 percent and to 5 percent for Academically Acceptable/Acceptable.

Table 14: TAAS Passing Standards for All Students and Each Student Group—grades 3–8, 10: Texas Education Agency

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Exemplary	≥90%	≥90%	≥90%	≥90%	≥90%	≥90%	≥90%
Recognized	≥70%	≥70%	≥75%	≥80%	≥80%	≥80%	≥80%
Academically Acceptable/ Acceptable	≥25%	≥30%	≥35%	≥40%	≥45%	≥50%	≥55%
Academically Unacceptable/Low Performing	<25%	<30%	<35%	<40%	<45%	<50%	<55%

Schools rated Exemplary, Recognized, or Acceptable that have exhibited significant gains in students performance are eligible for rewards through the Texas Successful Schools Awards Systems. Districts and campuses rated as Low Performing receive assistance from the state and regional Education Service Centers.

Identification of Low-Performing Schools

For the 2000-2001 school year, in order for districts and campuses to receive a rating of Academically Acceptable/Acceptable, at least 50 percent of all students and 50 percent of each student group that meets minimum size requirements must have passed each section of the TAAS. Districts and campuses with fewer than 50 percent of students passing the TAAS are rated Low Performing. Beginning in 2002, dropout rates must be at 5 percent or below and attendance at 94 percent or above for a district or campus to receive a rating of Academically Acceptable/Acceptable. If a school does not achieve this benchmark, it is labeled Low Performing. Of the 146 schools rated Low Performing in 2000, the majority received the rating due to poor performance on TAAS. Less than one-fifth received the rating due to high dropout rates.

Through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), the TEA annually collects a broad range of data on districts, campuses, and educators. The Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), implemented 1990-1991, draws on the PEIMS data for its annual AEIS reports. These reports provide detailed information on the performance of students in each school and district statewide. The reports include data on 10 performance indicators:

- TAAS passing rate by grade, subject, and all grades tested
- End-of-course examination participation and results
- Attendance rate
- Dropout rate
- Four-year longitudinal graduation and dropout rates
- Percent of high school students completing an advanced course
- Percent of graduates completing the Recommended High School Program
- Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate examination results
- TAAS/TASP equivalency rate
- SAT and ACT participation and results

Performance on each of these indicators is disaggregated by ethnicity, special education, and low-income status. Information on school and district staff, finances, programs, and demographics is also provided. In addition to these data, each school receives a performance label.

School Report Cards generated from the AEIS data are published for each school and include the school accountability rating, the district accountability rating, and TAAS data by subject. State, district, school, and student subgroup average scores are also reported, as is the progress made by students who failed the TAAS in the prior year.

Funding Resources for Low-Performing Schools

Although no state or federal funding is earmarked specifically for low-performing schools, state and

[18] The minimum size requirement for a student group to be included in the accountability formula is at least 30 students. For example, if a school had 25 African American students, African American would not be included as a subgroup to determine the school's performance rating.

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federal funds are provided to the Education Service Centers (ESC) to carry out the core services mandated by state law, including technical assistance to low-performing schools.

The ESCs are funded through a combination of state, federal, and local revenues. State revenues flow from the state to the ESCs through several different means, including direct legislative appropriation (Texas Education Code Chapter 8 funding); discretionary grants (e.g., School Improvement Initiative); program appropriation (e.g., State Visually Impaired, Pregnancy, Education, Parenting funding); and direct contract (e.g., Texas Integrated Funds Initiative). Taken together, direct and program-specific appropriations account for approximately 94 percent of the state funding to the ESCs. For 2000-2001 the amount of budgeted state revenues for the ESCs was $93.7 million (23.4 percent of total ESC revenue).

Federal categorical funds flow through the agency to the ESCs by formula (e.g., IDEA-B, ESEA Title I, Migrant Education grants), on the basis of an allocation (e.g., ESEA Title IV Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Child Nutrition Programs Technical Assistance Funds), and from competitive grants (e.g. Technology Integration in Education Grants). Federal revenues also include direct federal grants (e.g., Head Start) and categorical funding that flows from other state agencies (e.g., Early Childhood Intervention). For 2000-2001, the amount of budgeted federal revenues for the ESCs was approximately $155 million (38.76 percent of total ESC revenue).

ESCs also may sell their services to school districts, charter schools, and private schools to generate additional revenue. These revenues are generated in three ways: fee-for-service charges, revenues received as a fiscal agent and/or member of a shared services arrangement; and revenues from other local sources (other public and private entities). For 2000-2001, local revenues comprised 37.81 percent of total revenue for the ESCs, a total of $151.2 million.

State Compensatory Education Funds are allocated to districts based on a formula that includes the number of students on free or reduced lunch and provide an additional 10 percent to districts' basic allocation. These funds are to be used for programs aimed at improving the achievement of at-risk students. Districts may also use these funds to support their efforts to improve low-performing schools.

Other state funds are available for all schools to develop programs directed to at-risk students, not just low-performing schools. Optional Extended Year Funds are available to schools in which at least 35 percent of grade K-8 students are from economically disadvantaged families. With these funds, schools may develop after-school, Saturday, or summer programs to provide students an opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in the following school year. The Texas Reading Initiative represents another statewide initiative benefiting low-performing schools. This initiative, authorized by the Texas legislature in 1999, provides intensive reading training for all kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers. The state also offers incentives to teachers to teach in low-performing schools, such as the Master Reading Teacher grant program that offers an annual $5,000 stipend to teachers in low-performing schools.

Technical Assistance for Low-Performing Campuses

Accreditation Visits

Districts and campuses identified as academically unacceptable or low performing based on TAAS results receive an accreditation visit. If a campus receives a low performance rating based on dropout rates, a desk audit is conducted the first year. If the dropout rate exceeds state standards for all students or specific student populations for a second year, an accreditation visit is conducted.

Accreditation visits for either purpose are designed to provide a focus for improvement. District and campus staff describe these visits as comprehensive and extensive. The major purposes of accreditation reviews due to TAAS performance are to:

- Determine the progress of student populations not meeting state standards on the TAAS
- Determine the extent to which organized and effective decision making and planning is occurring at both district and school levels that address the specific areas of identified student performance deficiencies or condition(s) of performance
- Provide recommendations for district/school improvement
- Recommend follow-up when special program deficiencies are noted
- Recommend to the Commissioner of Education any additional sanctions deemed necessary

The site visits are conducted by trained peer review teams, which are guided by professional staff from the TEA. The peer review team is comprised of one or more TEA staff members and one or more Texas School Improvement Initiative (TSII) members. TSII members are practicing superintendents, principals, district-level staff, counselors, special program specialists, teachers, and other educators who have received TSII training. Peer review team members attend training sponsored annually by the Department of Quality, Compliance, and Accountability. More than 1,000 local district practitioners, including superintendents, principals, program and curriculum specialists, counselors, teachers,

and other educators, are trained to be peer reviewers each year.

A TEA staff member serves as the team chairperson and is responsible for coordinating the entire accreditation review. Prior to the site evaluation, the team chairperson reviews both internal TEA data and that from the district and/or campus to be visited. The peer review team members assist the team chairperson in gathering and analyzing data and compiling the written report of visit findings.

Over a period of four days, district and campus staff are asked about factors they believe contribute to their low performance and actions being taken to improve performance. The peer review team interviews the superintendent, board of trustees, district-level staff, teachers, and principals; conducts roundtable discussions with the district and campus staffs and parents; and observes classrooms. The site visit includes a review of the following:

- Areas of low performance or condition(s) of performance
- District and/or campus improvement plan
- Decision-making and planning policies and procedures
- District and/or campus self-evaluation documents
- District and/or campus budget summaries
- Agency-generated accountability profiles
- Previous accreditation reports
- Waivers and exceptions
- Reports of complaint investigations
- Other pertinent information available

The team presents its findings to the superintendent, district staff, principals, and campus staff. These reports identify the areas of need within a district and/or campus, and are to be used as the basis of a plan of action to address those areas. Each low-performing campus must develop an improvement plan describing how it will address specific areas of low performance.

For districts with one low-performing campus, only one campus report is produced. For districts with two or more low-performing campuses, one district report and a campus report for each campus are produced. The findings and recommendations of the peer review team may include the need for additional state sanctions and/or corrective actions.

Follow-up visits are conducted to provide feedback regarding the status of a school's improvement. During this visit, the team members review student performance results, the effectiveness of dropout prevention efforts, and the impact of implementation plans on student performance. If follow-up visits determine that the campus or district has not completed the improvement programs described in the initial report, further interventions and sanctions may occur. These may include:

- ESC technical assistance paid for by the district
- Follow-up review of progress by agency staff
- Assignment of a monitor, master, or management team to the district and paid for by the district
- A hearing before the commissioner or designee
- Reduction or withholding of funds
- Lowering the district accreditation rating

Education Service Centers

The Texas legislature established regional Education Service Centers (ESC) in 1965 to provide Title III funded services. In 1995 legislation mandated restructuring the centers, identifying core services and a market-driven structure for their operation. In 1997 legislation clarified the ESCs' role and function in improving student performance.

The regional Education Service Centers play a key role in the accreditation review by preparing the districts and campuses for the visit. The ESC also works with the district and the campus to identify resources and implement the improvement plan.

ESC staff members have a variety of backgrounds: they may be former teachers, campus-level administrators, or principals who have worked at the elementary, middle, or high school levels. In addition to their grade-level expertise, ESC staff typically have other specialties. The specialties vary by region, but include data analysis, campus planning, site-based decision making, Title I, staff development, special education, bilingual education, and subject area expertise such as reading/language arts and mathematics.

ESCs are responsible for providing focused technical assistance to all campuses in their region, not just those that are low performing. Services provided by the ESCs are of six major types:

- Core services identified in statute
- Decentralized agency functions
- Administrative support for schools
- Instructional support for schools
- Direct student instruction
- Other locally determined services

The chief purpose of all of these services is the improvement of student performance. Each regional ESC is required to provide core services for purchase by campuses and districts; however, assistance to low-performing schools is generally without cost to the school. The core services are:

- Training and technical assistance in teaching reading, mathematics, writing, social studies and science
- Training and technical assistance to programs of special education, compensatory education, bilingual education, and career and technical education

- Assistance specifically designed for a school district rated academically unacceptable or a campus whose performance is considered unacceptable
- Training and assistance to teachers, administrators, members of district boards of trustees, and members of site-based decision making committees
- Assistance specifically designed for a school district that is considered out of compliance with the state or federal special education requirements, based on the agency's most recent compliance review of the district's special education programs
- Assistance in complying with state laws and rules

Much of the work of the ESCs, with all the districts and campuses in each region, is focused on building capacity at the district and campus level. Specific programs and activities include administrator training initiatives; Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Leaders; principal academies; instructional leadership; and reading training for teachers. The primary role of the ESC in regard to low-performing schools is to provide technical assistance to district and campus staff. Prior to the accreditation visit, ESC staff may be involved in assisting district and campus staff members in preparing for the visit. Following the accreditation visit, the role of ESC is to provide technical assistance to districts and campuses in addressing the recommendations of the peer review teams and in addressing corrective actions cited with respect to compliance. Although districts and campuses are not required to accept ESC assistance, they are required to write an improvement plan and carry out the recommendations resulting from the site visit, with which the ESC can be a great help.

While the services provided to low-performing campuses differ slightly by region, there are commonalities. The primary one is the ability to customize services. Due to the structure of the accountability system and the requirement that all student groups achieve high standards, campuses and districts can identify not only low performance in a particular subject and grade but also particular student groups. For example, a school's Hispanic students may be low performing in grade 4 mathematics. Consequently, the improvement plan would include professional development, materials, and personnel to address instructional strategies for mathematics as well as for Hispanic students. This customized targeted approach appeared in both ESC regions included in this study.[19] This does not imply that the support and assistance provided by the ESCs and districts only focus on those areas. The district and campus reviews often uncover other areas of concern such as family involvement that would also be addressed through assistance from the ESC or the district.

Generally, one ESC staff person serves as the contact person for campuses as they organize assistance. The staff members identify actions being taken by the district to avoid duplication of services. They then plan other needed services with the campus or district staff, and the ESC and district and/or campus agree upon a service plan. Although the district provides what services it can, the appropriate personnel often are not available at the district level. ESC services fill that void.

ESC staff members provide services in a variety of ways. In one region, services are primarily in the form of workshops. ESC staff members conduct workshops with faculty around the subject area in which the campus is low performing. The workshops focus on the specific goals of that campus. If, for example, the campus is low performing in writing, ESC staff members will conduct workshops addressing instructional strategies based on analyses of student writing. The ESC also monitors student progress after the workshop to evaluate the effectiveness.

The intensity and length an ESC works with a campus or district depends on the needs of the district or campus. Regarding the length or intensity that the ESC works with a district or school, assistance does not end when the district or campus reaches an acceptable rating. ESCs continue to work with schools and districts as a part of their work with all campuses in the region.

Sanctions for Continuous Low Performance Ratings

Under the Public Education Grant Program, parents may transfer their children to another public school that has higher performance results if the district or campus is rated as Low Performing for two or more consecutive years. Also, if a district or campus is low performing in consecutive years, the level of state intervention increases. The commissioner determines the appropriate interventions. For districts those actions may include

- A hearing before the commissioner or designee
- Appointment of a state agency to monitor, participate in, and report to the state on the activities of the board of trustees or the superintendent
- Appointment of a master to oversee the operations of the district
- Assignment of a management team to direct the operations of the district in areas of unacceptable performance

[19] Staff at the Region 6 and Region 10 service centers were interviewed for this study as well as three districts and four schools that had received their services.

Table 15: Responsibilities in Regard to Low-Performance Rating: Texas Education Agency

	State	Educational Service Center	District	Campus
Low Performance (1st year)	Conduct accreditation visit; Conduct follow-up monitoring visit; Review campus improvement plan.	Help district and campus prepare for accreditation visit; Work with district and campuses to implement improvement plan.	Develop district improvement plan; Work with the ESC to implement the improvement plan; Public hearing by the board.	Develop campus improvement plan and submit for state review.
Low Performance (consecutive years)	Commissioner decides appropriate intervention: Assignment of intervention team; Hearing before commissioner; Appointment of board of managers; Plan for campus closure; Implement campus closure plan.	Work with campus to implement improvement plan.	Work with the ESC to implement the improvement plan.	Submit improvement plan for state review.
Academically Unacceptable District (1st year)	On-site peer review	Work with district to implement improvement plan.	Submit improvement plan for state review; Public hearing by the board.	
Academically Unacceptable District (consecutive years)	Possible interventions: State agency monitor; Master; management team.		Submit improvement plan for state review; Public hearing by the board.	

- Assignment of a state monitor, a master, or a management team
- Annexation of the district if it is rated Academically Unacceptable for four consecutive years

Campuses that have been rated as low performing for two or more consecutive years may receive any of the following sanctions and interventions:

- An issue of public notice and public hearing by the local board of trustees
- The submission of an improvement plan for state review
- An on-site peer review
- Education Service Center support
- The assignment of an intervention team
- A hearing before the commissioner or designee
- The appointment of a board of managers
- The development of a plan for closure of the campus
- The implementation of the campus closure plan

Table 15 illustrates state, service center, district, and school responsibilities with respect to low- performing campuses.

The Role of the District

Districts are expected to be aware of the performance of their campuses and to work with them to improve performance on the TAAS. As part of the state accountability review, districts must provide information about actions being taken to identify areas of need and to support improvement efforts of low-performing campuses. The ESCs assist with districts' preparation for state visits, a part of which is identifying areas of need for the school. The districts and the ESCs work in tandem to provide assistance and support to low-performing campuses.

Although the state does not provide funds to districts specifically earmarked for low-performing campuses, districts may draw on a variety of funding sources to support these efforts. For example, districts receive Compensatory Education Funds from the state based on a formula that includes the number of students enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program. The purpose of the State Compensatory Education program is to reduce the dropout rate and increase the academic performance of at-risk students. Districts may use these funds to support their efforts to improve low-performing schools.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The current monitoring and evaluation system for ESCs includes the following:

- An annual independent financial audit of the fiscal affairs of each ESC by a certified public accountant
- An annual desk audit by the TEA that reviews each ESC's financial audit, services provided, client appraisal of the effectiveness of those services, funds available, and performance of students within the region performed
- An on-site management and services audit of each ESC, conducted on a five-year cycle
- An on-site review of compliance with applicable federal and state statutes and regulations of each ESC, performed on a five-year cycle
- An annual performance review of each executive director by the commissioner of education, followed by recommendations to the respective ESC's board of directors with its recommendation on the rehiring of the executive director for the following year

Two indicators are used to measure the effectiveness of center services: student achievement and client satisfaction. The TEA uses three basic measures of student achievement to measure effectiveness: the percent of students passing the TAAS; the student dropout rate; and the student attendance rate. To measure client satisfaction, since 2000 an annual survey has been given to district superintendents, classroom teachers, and school principals from campuses that had received an accreditation rating of Low Performing.

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